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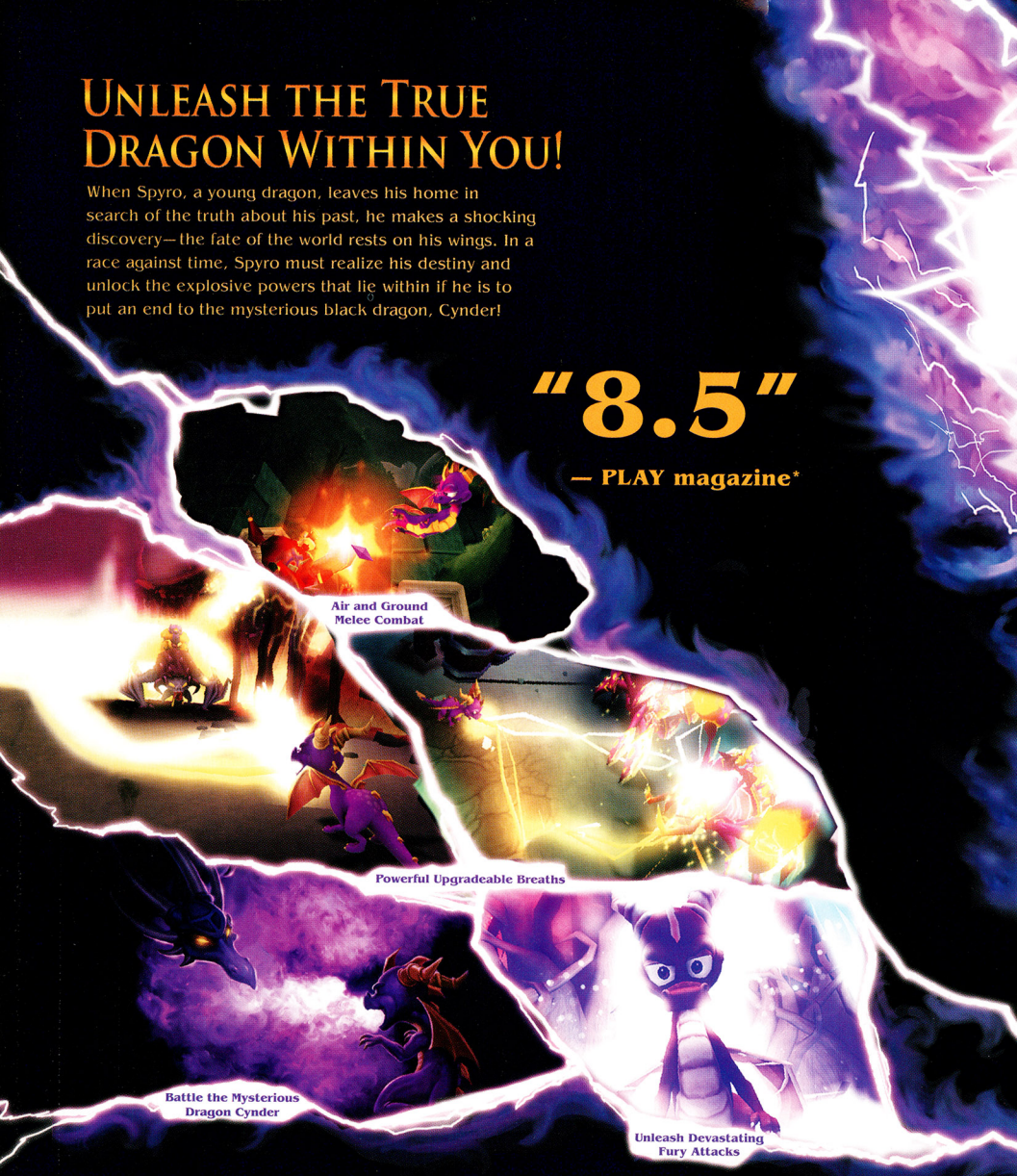

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NINTENDO POWER

CONTENTS JANUARY 2007

FEATURES

38 All the Right Moves
WarioWare: Smooth Moves will turn you into a Wii-remote contortionist. Our preview will show you what you're in for.

44 31 Reasons Why Wii Love the Virtual Console
The Wii gets a blast from the past with a slew of games for the Virtual Console. We overview our favorites.

48 Living the Hy Life
New to Hyrule? We've been in that scene since it was 2-D. Let us show you around.

58 Reflections on Zelda
Director Eiji Aonuma brings down the curtain on our coverage of Twilight Princess's development.

62 Five-Star Truck Test
We've got a great big convoy of Excite Truck tips.

70 Birth of a Hedgehog
It's rare for a hedgehog to live 15 years. We talk to Sonic's creators about how he was built to run and run and run.

74 The Path of Ruin
Crack that whip. Give the boss the slip using our Castlevania: Portrait of Ruin strategy tips.

82 A Full Belly
Get a taste of Kirby: Squeak Squad, the pink omnivore's latest for the DS.

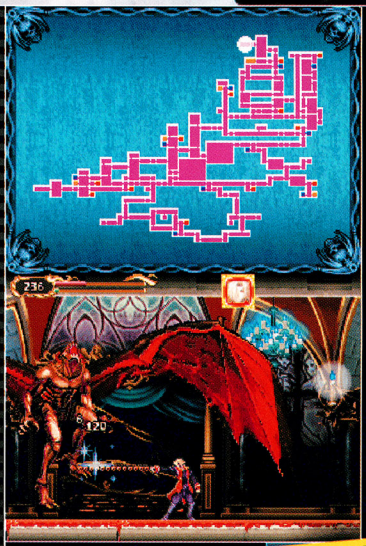
86 Court of Appeal
Gamers demanded a retrial, so Capcom will respond with Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Justice for All early next year.

90 10 Ways to Enjoy Your Island Getaway
Death awaits you in Yoshi's Island DS, but don't cancel your vacation yet. Instead, check out our platforming survival tips.

126 NP's Holiday Travel Guide
Going home for the holidays with your DS? We have some packing tips that will keep you playing well past Chinese New Year.

Instead of hanging your stocking with care, try using a green conical hat.

48
Hyrule on 10 rupees a day.



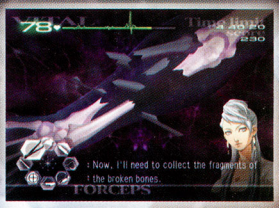
74
Sometimes even Dracula needs some foot reflexology.

Old-school goes online. Pg. 44

Who was the character least likely to appear in Nintendo Power in 1991? Pg. 70

TRAUMA CENTER™
SECOND OPINION

IT TAKES YEARS OF MEDICAL SCHOOL, RESIDENCY, AND CLINIC DUTY TO BECOME A SURGEON AND SAVE LIVES. OR, YOU COULD SKIP ALL THAT AND PUT IN A FEW HOURS AFTER DINNER.



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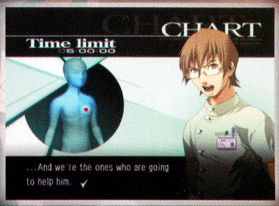

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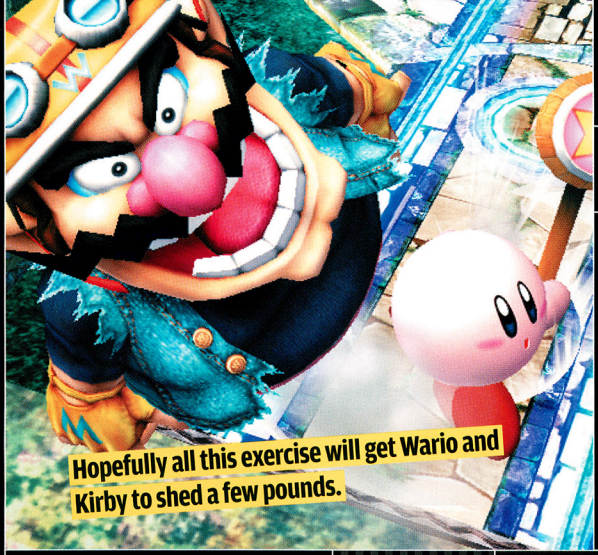


Hopefully all this exercise will get Wario and Kirby to shed a few pounds.

NINTENDO POWER

CONTENTS

30

HOTEL DUSK GOES LIGHTS OUT; STAR WARS TAKES A LETHAL DOSE; WINNING ELEVEN EVOLVES; INUYASHA IS DIVINE; METEOS MEETS MICKEY; SUPER SWING GOLF CHIPS IN; SPECTROBES EXCAVATES; IZUNA GETS A JOB

PRE-VIEW

DEPARTMENTS

14 Pulse
This month we break records, go out to lunch, and smell fantastic.

22 News
The Big N opens up about the next wave of Wii titles, and acclaimed developer Level-5 brings their magic to the DS.

28 Smash Files

30 Previews
Hotel Dusk is looking super cool—imagine Trace Memory meets Raymond Chandler and you get the idea.

94 Playback

95 Reviews
Check out what we think of the first wave of Wii games, as well as a ton of monster titles for the DS.

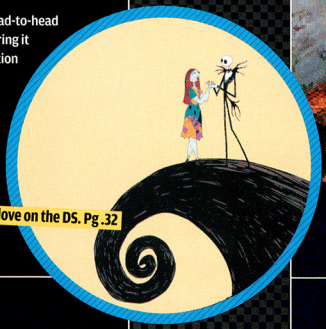
122 Community
Think you can beat us head-to-head at Star Fox Command? Bring it on! The next NP competition is coming soon.

128 Next Month

129 Contacts

24 The mustache is back.

30 Can you spare a dime for a fella who's down on his luck?



Jack Skellington finds true love on the DS. Pg.32

Hey! Get back here! You gotta pay for that! Pg. 103

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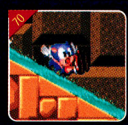
GAME INDEX

GAME TITLE	PAGE
Animal Crossing: Wild World (DS)	126
The Ant Bully (Wii)	116
Avatar: The Last Airbender (Wii)	116
The Barnyard (Wii)	116
The Biggs (Wii)	26
Bionicle Heroes (GCN)	108
Bionicle Heroes (DS)	116
Bomberman DS (DS)	126
Bomberman Land Touch! (DS)	108
Bonk's Adventure (VC)	46
Brain Age (DS)	126
Call of Duty 3 (Wii)	99
Cars (Wii)	116
Castlevania II: Simon's Quest (NES)	94
Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow (DS)	126
Castlevania: Portrait of Ruin (DS)	24, 74, 114
Catz (DS)	116
Children of Mana (DS)	126
Charlotte's Web (DS)	112
Clubhouse Games (DS)	126
Cooking Mama: Cook Off (Wii)	26
Disaster: Day of Crisis (Wii)	22
Dogz (DS)	116
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi 2 (Wii)	112
Ecco the Dolphin (VC)	46
Elite Beat Agents (DS)	126
Eragon (DS)	116
Excite Truck (Wii)	62, 110
Final Fantasy III (DS)	103
Fire Emblem* (Wii)	22
F-Zero (VC)	45
The Grim Adventures of Billy & Mandy (Wii)	116
Golden Axe (VC)	46
GT Pro Series (Wii)	106
Gunstar Heroes (VC)	46
Happy Feet (Wii, GCN)	116
Harlem Globetrotters World Tour (DS, GBA)	116
Heatseeker (Wii)	25
Hotel Dusk: Room 215 (DS)	30
InuYasha: Secret of the Divine Jewel (DS)	32
Izuna: Legend of the Unemployed Ninja (DS)	35
Kirby: Squeak Squad (DS)	82
Konami Classic Series: Arcade Hits (DS)	23
The Legend of Zelda (VC)	45
The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess (Wii)	48, 58, 98
Lost in Blue 2 (DS)	23
Madden NFL 07 (Wii)	102
Mario Party 8 (Wii)	22
Mario vs. Donkey Kong 2: March of the Minis (DS)	124
Marvel: Ultimate Alliance (Wii)	102
Metal Slug Anthology (Wii)	108
Meteos: Disney Magic (DS)	32
Metroid Prime 3: Corruption (Wii)	22
Micro Machines v4 (DS)	116
Monster 4x4: World Circuit (Wii)	102
My Frogger: Toy Trials (DS)	116
Need for Speed: Carbon (Wii)	106
Need for Speed: Carbon (DS, GBA)	116
Open Season (Wii)	116
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney (DS)	126
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Justice for All (DS)	86
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Blue Rescue Team (DS)	126
Professor Layton and the Mysterious Village (DS)	24
Project H.A.M.M.E.R. (Wii)	22
Rampage: Total Destruction (Wii)	106
Rayman Raving Rabbids (Wii)	97
Red Steel (Wii)	106
R-Type (VC)	46
The Sims 2 Pets (GCN)	110
The Sims 2 Pets (DS, GBA)	116
Solomon's Key (VC)	45
Sonic the Hedgehog (GEN)	70
Sonic the Hedgehog Genesis (GBA)	112
Spectrobes (DS)	34
Splinter Cell: Double Agent (Wii)	97
SpongeBob SquarePants: Creature from the Krusty Krab (Wii)	114
Star Fox Command (DS)	126
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance (DS)	31
Super Mario 64 (VC)	45
Super Monkey Ball: Banana Blitz (Wii)	112
Super Robot Taisen: Original Generation 2	99
Super Smash Bros. Brawl (Wii)	24, 28
Super Swing Golf (Wii)	34
Tamagotchi Connection: Corner Shop 2 (DS)	116
ToeJam & Earl (VC)	46
Tomb Raider: Legend (GCN)	116
Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam (DS)	110
Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam (GBA)	116
Trauma Center: Second Opinion (Wii)	108
Urban Champion (VC)	45
WarioWare: Smooth Moves! (Wii)	38
Wii Play (Wii)	22
Wii Sports (Wii)	96
Winning Eleven: Pro Evolution Soccer 2007 (DS)	32
Yggdra Union (GBA)	114
Yoshi's Island DS (DS)	90, 100



DS = Nintendo DS
GBA = Game Boy Advance
GCN = Nintendo GameCube
GEN = Sega Genesis
NES = Nintendo Entertainment System
N64 = Nintendo 64
SNES = Super Nintendo
VC = Wii Virtual Console
Wii = Wii

* Tentative Title

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OCT. 2006
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Pulse

THE AGE OF Wii

By the time you read this letter a new age of video gaming will have dawned. Wii is finally here. I hope you've had a chance to try Wii for yourself at one of many participating GameStop stores in the US or EB Games stores in Canada, or in 25 selected malls around the US and 10 in Canada, where the Wii Mall Experience offers playable versions of Wii Sports boxing, bowling and tennis, Excite Truck, The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess, and Wii Play—Duck Hunt. (Click on Try Wii at wii.nintendo.com to find US locations, or visit nintendo.ca to find Canadian locations where you can experience Wii.) But if you've been unable to test-drive Wii, never fear. The NP staff has been swatting tennis balls and stabbing baddies for the past couple of months so we could bring you our opinions about the first batch of Wii games. No other online or print source can say the same. What you'll discover is an amazingly varied and deep library—the best ever for a console launch! Leading the way is The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess. This month we review the game, share tips for surviving in Hyrule, offer up a special poster, and bring you the final word on the game from its director. We also celebrate significant anniversaries for two of the most beloved game franchises ever with a look back at the origins of Sonic the Hedgehog and an in-depth miniguide focused on boss-beating strategies for Castlevania: Portrait of Ruin. Our DS coverage also includes previews of Kirby: Squeak Squad and Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Justice for All, plus the top 10 tips for the incredibly challenging Yoshi's Island DS—you'll need them.

Scott Pelland
Managing Editor

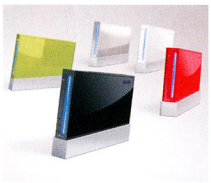
LETTERS

ROY G. BiiV

Hi, I must say I'm really looking forward to the launch of Wii. I have a question on it, though. I think I remember in a previous article covering E3 (the one where the Wii was first introduced) that the system would come in different colors. After that, though, you said no more about it and all the pictures of the system showed it in white. Does this mean it will only come in white?

Christian R.
via the Internet

When Wii launches on November 19, the only available color will be white. Nintendo does plan on introducing other colors down the road, although no timeline has been set for their release.



Mii GOT SKILLZ

I heard something about how as you play Wii, your Mii's skill level will increase. How exactly will it work?

Ryederek
via the Internet

We're not sure about all the applications of this feature, but we've experienced it firsthand in Wii Sports. The more you play, the more skill points your Mii will receive. Wii Sports will adjust the CPU players' skill levels accordingly to keep them competitive.

STAY UP-TO-DATE

Is there a way that Nintendo can send out e-mail updates about subjects you like most? For example, if I am a diehard RPG fan and I want to know about any new releases, could Nintendo send me an e-mail about RPG news? It would be one more way that I could learn about my favorite games. Also, are there any Dragon Warrior titles in production?

Peder H.
via the Internet

One of the best ways to receive up-to-date information on future games is to become a My Nintendo member at nintendo.com. You'll receive e-mails tailored to suit your interests. As for Dragon Warrior, check out the excellent recently released Rocket Slime, and look forward to Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker arriving next year.

IT'S GOOD TO BE EVIL

I've noticed a problem with many single-player games. No matter how fun they are, I get tired of playing them. Therefore, I must ask you one question: Is it possible to grow bored of Resident Evil 4?

Nick E.
via the Internet

Believe it or not, it's actually impossible to get bored with RE4. How could shooting zombies with shotguns lose its luster?

DO A SPIT TAKE

The other day I was playing WarioWare: Touched! on my DS when a minigame came up that required the microphone. It surprised me, and I ended up sending a huge blob of saliva right into the mic! I panicked at first, but then I realized that it still worked, so I was OK. Nintendo must make these things really well because most other devices would be ruined after something like that.

SegaHolik
via the Internet

Gee thanks, SegaHoli; you won the grossest-e-mail-of-the-month award. Your prize is knowing that you've implanted an awful mental image of your spit clogging up our DSes every time we open them.

THE NEW GLOBAL ECONOMY

What's the reason that the Wii Virtual Console won't be able to download games from Japan? This has been a quandary of we old-school Nintendo fans for a while now. I mean, if a game like Doki Doki Panic or Mother 1 is made available for download in Japan, why should we die-hards not be able to download them? Meaning, is there a Virtual regional lockout on the Wii? And if so . . . why? I wouldn't mind using a few extra Wii points to download Akumajo Densetsu, or Seiken Densetsu 3, or Doraemon for my Wii Virtual Console.

Alucardsquest
via the Internet

Alas, region encoding will exist for the Virtual Console. It's a tricky subject that has to do with the economics of global business more than anything else. All we can hope for is that The Big N shares some of the love and brings games like Mother and Seiken Densetsu 3 (the sequel to Secret of Mana) stateside.

SOMEONE CALL GUINNESS

Hey, guys! I'm pretty sure I hold a record for carrying my Pikachu GS [handheld virtual pet]. I've had it for over two years now. And yes, I actually wear it on my waist everyday. I even

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I have a few questions about the Reviews section of Nintendo Power that I've been meaning to ask for a while. First, how come a game is reviewed only by one person? Personally, I never liked this change because I always want more than one opinion about a game; it makes it a bit easier for me to decide which games are worth checking out. Second, how does the rating system work? Not to sound rude, but when I compare some of your review scores to other people's scores, I get the impression that you're being a bit too generous sometimes.

Zeus Guy
via the Internet

We've responded to these questions before, but it's worth revisiting the topic occasionally. In a perfect world, we'd love to have multiple reviewers play a game so we can supply strong counterpoints, but there just aren't enough hours in a day. We'll sacrifice multiple reviews for the opportunity to review games more completely. As for our scores being generous, we're pretty much on par with most of the industry—a check at the score-aggregating site gamerankings.com shows a pretty fair comparison to other gaming outlets. We get plenty of letters claiming that we're too harsh on games, as well. You can't please all people all the time. Don't worry, though; we take our reviews very seriously and want our readers to get the most gaming bang for their buck.

use it as my alarm clock! It fell in a toilet, on the floor . . . I even lost it in a forest once and managed to find it! I'm still carrying it today (the batteries sure do last long). I couldn't take a good picture, but it says I'm on day 917, and I've taken 8091819 steps.

Canyx
via the Internet

POPS HAS SOME POP

I just went to one of the Nintendo Fusion Tours and I took my dad with me to the event. We played several of the Wii kiosks they had set up. My dad beat me at Wii Sports tennis AND Wii Sports baseball, and he's not even a gamer. He later said that he thought the Wii games he tried were "cool." I'm starting to now believe that Nintendo's motto "Playing Is Believing" is true. I salute you guys and Nintendo for telling the truth.

Jedimas4
via the Internet

Thanks for the compliment, but jeez, you got beat by your old man?!? Time to stop playin' hooky from gym class.

WE REEK OF AWESOMENESS

When was the last time you guys showered? Seriously. I just received a very smelly magazine from you guys. I'm not very pleased.

Solid SNK
via the Internet

You must've received an issue with an ad for our new cologne, Eau de Power. Made with the gamer in mind, this new cologne will surely keep friends and loved ones away while you play Twilight Princess.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, MOM!

I have a serious problem. I've been saving for a Wii for a while now, and I'm going to have just enough to buy it. But the problem is, my mother's birthday is only a week before its launch, and I won't have enough for both a Wii and a present! What would Chris Shepperd do?

The Oracle
via the Internet

Chris says: Are you crazy? Did you see my mom in Volume 205? She's so caught up in Brain Age she's forgotten all about me. I'm scot-free! You're on your own, Oracle!

SMILE FOR THE CAMERA

I think there should be a Pokémon Snap made for the Wii. The Wii's revolutionary controller could make taking pictures a snap (no pun intended), and the Wii's Wi-Fi capabilities and Wii Photo Channel could allow players to share their Pokémon pictures with other players all over the world!

Mathieu J.
via the Internet

We're floored once again by the creativity of our readers. Like Josh K.'s Wii Weather Channel idea last month, the Photo Channel may have all kinds of alternate uses. We haven't heard for sure whether this technology is possible, but we're keeping our fingers crossed.

MMM . . . GAMECUBE

I read on the Nsider forums that some people are planning to take the insides of their GameCube out and use it as a lunch box. I think this is cruelty to Nintendo products. What do you geniuses at NP think?

Chris L.
via the Internet

We're glad to hear that someone's finally putting the GCN's dorky handle to use, but we just can't see why you'd wanna tear apart a perfectly good console.

CORRECTOR'S CORNER

I just wanted to point out an error in Volume 210 (December 2006). In "The Stuff of Legends" article, you list Gohma as appearing in The Legend of Zelda, Link's Awakening, Ocarina of Time, Majora's Mask, The Wind Waker, Four Swords Adventures, and The Minish Cap. Gohma is neither featured in Majora's Mask nor The Minish Cap. You also didn't mention that Gohma was in Oracle of Seasons.

Triforce89
via the Internet

You got us. Good eye. Get it? Eye? Ah, never mind.

Additionally, we also caught an error in Volume 210. We stated that Wii's Opera Web browser would require a separate purchase; in fact, you'll be able to download it without spending Wii points from the time it's available until mid-June 2007. Happy surfing!

PLEASE WRITE US:

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Nintendo Power
PO Box 97033
Redmond, WA 98073-9733

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ZOMBIE NATION

PUBLISHER
T. Kimishima
EDITOR IN CHIEF
Yoshio Tsuboike
MANAGING EDITOR
Scott Pelland
ART DIRECTOR
Kim Logan
SENIOR WRITER/EDITOR
George Sinfield
Drew Williams
SENIOR WRITER
Steve Thomason
STAFF WRITERS
Chris Hoffman
Andy Myers
Christopher Shepperd
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Casey Loe
EDITORIAL CONSULTANTS
Reggie Fils-Aime
George Harrison
Dan Owsen
Jacqualee Story
Juana Tingdale
COPY EDITOR
Candace English
ASSISTANT PRODUCTION MANAGER
Machiko Oehler
PRINT PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR
Paul Gerlt
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR
Mayumi Colson
ASSISTANT ART DIRECTOR
Jim Catechi
SENIOR DESIGNER
Tim Garret
DESIGNERS
Cory Conner
Rebekah Lane
David Waterworth
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT/ CONTRIBUTING WRITER
Pete Michaud
DESIGN, GAME STRATEGY & ILLUSTRATION
V-DESIGN Inc.
V-DESIGN INC. ART DIRECTOR
Yoshi Orimo
V-DESIGN INC.
Adam Crowell
Emily Crowell
Oliver Crowell
Matt Fisher
Brian Jones
Sonja Morris
BUSINESS DIRECTOR
Casey Pelkey
MARKETING MANAGER
Jeff Bafus
SALES AND MARKETING ASSISTANT MANAGER
Malinda Miller

For advertising inquiries, contact
NP.ADVERTISING@NOA.NINTENDO.COM

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MOST WANTED

As voted on by the readers. Go to nintendo.com/mostwanted and let your voice be heard!

>Wii

1. Super Smash Bros. Brawl
2. Metroid Prime 3: Corruption
3. Super Mario Galaxy
4. Fire Emblem
5. Harvest Moon Wii

>Nintendo DS

1. The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass
2. Kirby: Squeak Squad
3. Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Ring of Fates
4. Phoenix Wright Ace Attorney: Justice for All
5. Custom Robo Arena

TOP SELLERS

>Nintendo GameCube

The force is strong with this one, as are the sales. We just hope C-3PO is getting his due royalties for the hard work he's putting in.

1. Lego *Star Wars* II: The Original Trilogy
2. Madden NFL 07
3. Lego *Star Wars*
4. Naruto: Clash of Ninja 2
5. Naruto: Clash of Ninja
6. Paper Mario: The Thousand-Year Door
7. Super Smash Bros. Melee
8. Mario Kart: Double Dash!
9. Star Fox: Assault
10. Teen Titans

TOP SELLERS

>Game Boy Advance

Just as we expected, Pokémon Mystery Dungeon has rocketed to the top of the charts for both DS and GBA.

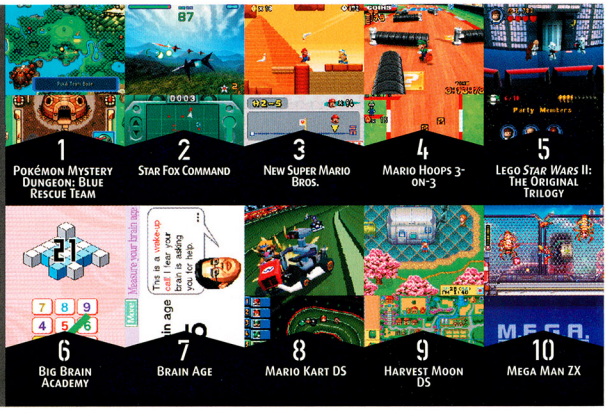
1. Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Red Rescue Team
2. Lego *Star Wars* II: The Original Trilogy
3. Super Mario Advance
4. Pokémon Emerald
5. Cars
6. Super Mario Advance 4: Super Mario Bros. 3
7. Yoshi's Island: Super Mario Advance 3
8. Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga
9. Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest
10. Dogz

Pokémon Mystery Dungeon is the talk of the town.

TOP SELLERS

>Nintendo DS

Brain Age and Big Brain Academy lose ground to Pikachu and pals.



Sales data courtesy of the NPDFunworld TRSTS Video Game Source.

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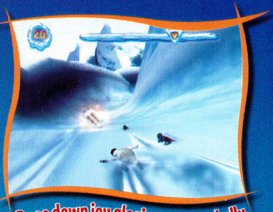

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Wii DOGFIGHTS

BRAWL UPDATE

LEVEL-5's DS MYSTERY

THE FUTURE OF Wii

What's Next

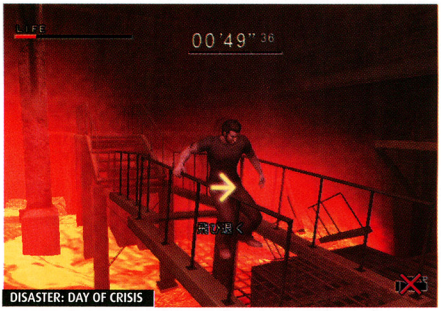
Wii PLAY

The future is bright for Wii, as is evident in a batch of new screenshots that reveal upcoming standouts.

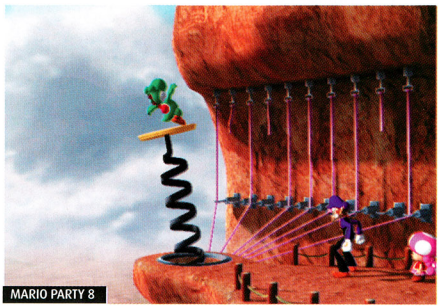
The Wii launch lineup is just the tip of the iceberg for Nintendo's upstart console. Glimpses of upcoming titles were shown recently at the Nintendo World event in Japan, ranging from the latest installment of the ever-popular Mario Party series to all-new properties Project H.A.M.M.E.R. and Disaster: Day of Crisis. The newly released screenshots provide our initial look at the latter, as hero Ray runs over a collapsing walkway. The first of these titles to emerge will be Wii Play. The game collection, due out in January, will emphasize mulitplayer activities and include a Wii remote. In addition to the pictured Ping Pong game, expect billiards, air hockey, cow racing, and much more. —GEORGE S.

FIRE EMBLEM

METROID PRIME 3: CORRUPTION



DISASTER: DAY OF CRISIS


MARIO PARTY 8

PROJECT H.A.M.M.E.R.

BLUE OCEAN

Return to Paradise

Lose yourself in the exclusive first screenshots and info for Lost in Blue 2, Konami's survival-game sequel for the DS.

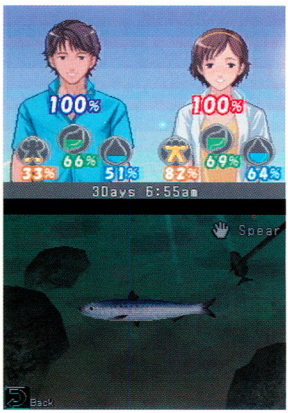
The wind and waves are once again kicking up on the DS—Lost in Blue 2 is coming, and that means it's time to batten down the hatches.

Lost in Blue 2 will follow the same gameplay system as its predecessor—you must guide a young man and woman as they explore a tropical (and apparently deserted) island to look for food and shelter, as well as for signs of life or a way to safety. Unlike in the original game, you'll be able to choose to play as either character from the outset. The two survivors will work more closely together than in the previous game, as well.

To complete tasks, such as hunting or building furniture, you'll play minigames that feature the stylus; Konami promises that there will be nearly twice the number of these activities as there were in the first title. Besides the many new touch-screen diversions, Lost in Blue 2 will also take advantage of the DS's microphone, but while Konami promises that the new feature will be very interesting, they're not yet ready to divulge details.

In addition to the main adventure, you'll be able to test your minigame skills against others via single-card wireless play. Konami let us know that one of the activities will be a fishing competition; the rest of the games remain a secret for now.

We're pretty excited about the new features—it sounds like the developers are looking to address many of the criticisms the first Lost in Blue earned. Be assured that we'll continue to track this game's progress as its 2007 release approaches. —Chris S.



COIN-OP COMEBACK

Aliens to Athletes

Konami reaches into its extensive arcade vault and brings more than 12 quarter-munching classics to Nintendo DS.

Years ago, the only way you could play games like Gradius, Rush'n Attack, or Yie Ar Kung-Fu was to plunk down quarters at your local arcade. But come March 2007, you'll be able to play those games and several more—any time, anyplace—with the release of Konami Classic Series: Arcade Hits on DS. The compilation boasts more than 12 vintage Konami coin-ops, ranging from all-time greats like Contra and Track and Field to lesser-known titles like Time Pilot, Roc'n Rope, and Circus Charlie. The collection will offer several viewing options that take advantage of the DS's dual screens to re-create the games' original aspect ratios, including configurations in which you turn the DS on its side. Expect plenty of bells and whistles, too, including multiplayer action and bonuses such as trivia, artwork, and a music player. —Chris H.

The collection's authentic arcade port of Contra has plenty of sights not found in the NES version.

BITS OF TID

R.I.P. Clover

Capcom shuts down acclaimed development studio.

In one of the year's saddest bits of video game news, Capcom recently announced the dissolution of critical darling Clover Studio. Shinji Mikami (Resident Evil 4) will continue working at Capcom as a contracted producer, but Atsushi Inaba (Viewtiful Joe) and Hideki Kamiya (Okami) have left the company to seek "fresh challenges."

Portrait of Awesome

New Castlevania gets greatest pre-order bonus ever.

If you haven't reserved Castlevania: Portrait of Ruin yet, run to your nearest GameStop, EB Games, or Game Crazy and do so immediately. As a special pre-order bonus, you'll receive a 48-page art book that contains illustrations from every game in the series, a 20th Anniversary soundtrack CD, an extendable stylus emblazoned with the Castlevania logo, a DS game case, and a timeline poster that details key events in the series' history.

NEWS FROM JAPAN!

The Fifth Element

The developer behind the Dark Cloud series and Dragon Quest VIII announces its first-ever DS project: Professor Layton and the Mysterious Village.

After gaining renown with a number of successful console RPGs, developer Level-5 has turned its sights toward the DS with an all-new adventure game called Professor Layton and the Mysterious Village. The story-driven caper places a heavy emphasis on solving riddles, and is a collaboration between Level-5 and Akira Tago, the author of a popular series of puzzle books in Japan. No word yet on a US release, but given the developer's track record (and how cool the game looks), we'd be shocked if this one doesn't make it here eventually. —Steve T.

Professor Layton's narrative unfolds through some impressive animated cut-scenes.

A NEW CHALLENGER

Fur Fighter

A familiar face returns to the fray as Nintendo unveils a new trailer and screenshots for Super Smash Bros. Brawl.

For the first time since the game's unveiling at E3 last May, Nintendo has pulled back the curtain a little more on Super Smash Bros. Brawl. The biggest revelation is that series vet Fox McCloud will once again join the star-studded fisticuffs (though was there ever any doubt?). In addition, this new batch of pics provides the first glimpse of Solid Snake in action, as well as what appears to be Pit's stage.

Hopefully the all-new trailer, slated to debut at the Nintendo World event in Japan, will shed even more light on the hotly anticipated fighter. If you can't make it to the other side of the Pacific, head to smashbros.com; the trailer should be available there soon. —Steve T.

THE ICEMAN COMETH

Frag and Seek

Codemasters is set to scramble the world's finest fighter planes on the Wii in Heatseeker: an arcade-style shooter.

If you think you spend too much time adjusting your yaw axis in the average fighter-plane sim, but you also can't abide the generic-looking scrap iron you fly in most arcade shooters, then you're just the kind of fighter jock Codemasters is looking for. Heatseeker, slated for spring 2007, pairs the most sophisticated weapon systems ever produced with a somewhat less-sophisticated activity: blowing up crap and watching it burn.

"Real planes engage at ranges of 10 kilometers plus, but that doesn't make [for] great gameplay. It's far cooler when you see your kills up close and personal," said Andrew Wensley, a senior producer at Codemasters. Heatseeker's solution: when you light up a target and unleash a missile from your F-22 Raptor or SU-47 Berkut, the camera switches to "impact cam" mode. You'll close in on the enemy plane—smart-bomb-style—then watch some pretty fireworks upon contact. "The fruits of your explosive labor are shown full-screen, with blurs, burns, and bullet time with every particle effect we can lay our hands on."

Wensley said the development team is still tweaking the controls to take full advantage of the Wii's capabilities. One approach uses the nunchuk as a free-floating traditional stick controller and another uses the Wii remote as a kind of aeronautical voodoo doll—when you tilt the remote, the plane follows suit. Either way, the game's fast-twitch pacing will demand that you master the control scheme before you, as Wensley puts it, end up "seriously crispy." —Drew W.

In a real war, air-superiority fighters like the F-22 (above) and the F-15 (left) fly very high and destroy stuff from many miles away before anybody detects them. Where's the fun in that? Heatseeker will allow you to get down and dirty with these exotic planes.

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GAME WATCH FORECAST

New game announcements are always slow this time of year as publishers concentrate on their big holiday offerings. Still, there are a few noteworthy additions to the forecast this month.

Wii

Game Title	Publisher	●●●
The Ant Bully	Midway	●●●
Avatar: The Last Airbender	THQ	●●●
Barnyard	THQ	●●●
Battalion Wars 2	Nintendo	●●○
Big Brain Academy	Nintendo	●●○
The Bigs	2K Sports	●○○
Blazing Angels: Squadrons of WW II	Ubisoft	●●○
Blitz: The League	Midway	●●○
Bust-a-Move Bash®	Majesco	●●○
Call of Duty 3	Activision	●●●
Cars	THQ	●●●
Chicken Little: Ace in Action	Buena Vista	●●○
Cooking Mama: Cook Off	Majesco	●○○
Disaster: Day of Crisis	Nintendo	●●○
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi 2	Atari	●●●
Dragon Quest Swords: The Masked Queen and the Tower of Mirrors	Square Enix	●●○
Elebits	Konami	●●●
Excite Truck	Nintendo	●●●
Far Cry: Vengeance	Ubisoft	●●●
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Crystal Bearers	Square Enix	●●○
Fire Emblem®	Nintendo	●●○
The Godfather	EA	●○○
The Grim Adventures of Billy & Mandy	Midway	●●●
GT Pro Series	Ubisoft	●●●
Happy Feet	Midway	●●●
Harvest Moon Wii®	Natsume	●●○
Heatseeker	Codemasters	●●○
Ice Age 2	Vivendi	●●●
The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess	Nintendo	●●●
Madden NFL 07	EA	●●●
Mario Party 8®	Nintendo	●●○
Mario Strikers: Charged	Nintendo	●●○
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	Activision	●●●
Medal of Honor: Airborne	EA	●●○
Meet the Robinsons	Buena Vista	●●○
Metal Slug Anthology	SNK	●●●
Metroid Prime 3: Corruption	Nintendo	●●○
Monster 4x4: World Circuit	Ubisoft	●●●
Mortal Kombat: Armageddon	Midway	●●○
Need for Speed: Carbon	EA	●●○
One Piece: Unlimited Adventure	Namco Bandai	●●○
Open Season	Ubisoft	●●●
Prince of Persia®	Ubisoft	●○○
Project H.A.M.M.E.R.	Nintendo	●●○
Rampage: Total Destruction	Midway	●●●
Rapala Tournament Fishing	Activision	●●●
Rayman Raving Rabbids	Ubisoft	●●●
Red Steel	Ubisoft	●●●
Sonic and the Secret Rings	Sega	●●○
SpongeBob SquarePants: Creature from the Krusty Krab	THQ	●●●
SSX®	EA	●○○
Super Mario Galaxy	Nintendo	●●○
Super Monkey Ball: Banana Blitz	Sega	●●●
Super Smash Bros. Brawl	Nintendo	●●○
Super Swing Golf	Tecmo	●●○
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles®	Ubisoft	●○○
Tiger Woods PGA Tour®	EA	●○○
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent	Ubisoft	●●●
Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam	Activision	●●●
Trauma Center: Second Opinion	Atlus	●●●
WarioWare: Smooth Moves	Nintendo	●●○
Wii Play	Nintendo	●●○
Wii Sports	Nintendo	●●●
World Series of Poker	Activision	●●●

TWO FOR Wii

A Whole New Ball Game

2K Sports welcomes gamers to The Bigs.

Next summer, 2K Sports will put an arcade spin on the great American past-time with The Bigs for Wii. Developer Big Castle Games (which includes a number of former team members from EA Sports' MVP series) promises intuitive batting and pitching mechanics, outrageous power-ups, and larger-than-life MLB player models and ballparks. Big Castle also hopes to include online play for up to four players. No word yet on Wii-specific controls, but they're not hard to imagine.

Home Cookin'

Majesco's culinary matriarch brings her addictive victuals to Wii.

Someone at Majesco must be awfully hungry. Hot on the heels of the original Cooking Mama and the announcement of Cake Mania, the publisher has revealed that it will bring Cooking Mama: Cook Off to Wii early next year. The game will allow armchair gourmands to create more than 300 real-world recipies from 10 different countries, and pit their culinary skills against a friend in two-player kitchen competitions.

NINTENDO DS

Game Title	Publisher	●●●
A Boy and His Blob	Majesco	●●○
Arthur and the Invisibles	Atari	●●○
Asphalt: Urban GT 2	Ubisoft	●●○
Barbie in the 12 Dancing Princesses	Activision	●●●
Bionicle Heroes	Eidos	●●●
Bomberman Land Touch!	Atlus	●●●
Brain Boost: Beta Wave	Majesco	●●○
Brain Boost: Gamma Wave	Majesco	●●○
Cake Mania	Majesco	●●○
California Games	System 3	●●○
Cameltry	TBA	●●○
Cartoon Network Racing	American Game Factory	●●○
Castlevania: Portrait of Ruin	Konami	●●●
Catz	Ubisoft	●●●
Charlotte's Web	Sega	●●●
Chibi-Robo: Park Patrol	Nintendo	●●○
Chronos Twin	Lexicon	●●○
Code Lyoko	American Game Factory	●○○
Custom Robo Arena	Nintendo	●●○
Danny Phantom: Urban Jungle	THQ	●●○
Death, Jr. and the Science Fair of Doom	Konami	●●○
Digimon World DS	Namco Bandai	●●○
DK King of Swing DS®	Nintendo	●●○
Dogz	Ubisoft	●●●
DS Air®	Nintendo	●●○
Dynasty Warriors®	Koei	●●○
Eragon	Vivendi	●●●
Etrian Odyssey	Atlus	●●○
Europa Universalis II	Pocket PC	●●○
F-24 Stealth Fighter	Majesco	●●●
Final Fantasy III	Square Enix	●●●
Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings	Square Enix	●●○
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Ring of Fates®	Square Enix	●●○
Flushed Away	D3PA	●●●
Fullmetal Alchemist: Dual Sympathy	Destineer	●●○
Garfield: A Tale of Two Kitties	American Game Factory	●●○
GoPets	Konami	●●○
Hamsterz Life	Ubisoft	●●○
Hannah Montana	Buena Vista	●●○
Happy Feet	Midway	●●●
Horsez	Ubisoft	●●○
Hotel Dusk: Room 215	Nintendo	●●○
Impossible Mission	System 3	●●○
Indiana Jones 2007®	LucasArts	●○○
InuYasha: Secret of the Divine Jewel	Namco Bandai	●●○
Izuna: Legend of the Unemployed Ninja	Atlus	●●○
Kim Possible: Global Gemini	Buena Vista	●●○
Kirby: Squeak Squad	Nintendo	●●○
Konami Classic Series: Arcade Hits	Konami	●●○
Legend of the River King®	Natsume	●○○
The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords®	Nintendo	●○○
The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass	Nintendo	●●○
Lionel Trains: On Track	Destination	●●●
The Little Mermaid: Ariel's Undersea Adventure	Buena Vista	●●●
Lost in Blue 2	Konami	●●○
Lunar Knights	Konami	●●○
March of the Penguins	Destination	●●○
Marvel Trading Card Game	Konami	●●○
Meet the Robinsons	Buena Vista	●○○
Mega Man Star Force	Capcom	●●○
Meteos: Disney Magic	Buena Vista	●○○
Micro Machines v4	Codemasters	●●●
Monster Bomber	Majesco	●●○
Monster Rancher	Tecmo	●○○
Moonlight Fables®	Majesco	●○○
My Frogger Toy Trials	Konami	●●○
Nanostray 2	TBD	●●○
Need for Speed: Carbon	EA	●●○
Nintendogs: Dalmatian	Nintendo	●●○
One Piece	Namco Bandai	●●○
Panzer Tactics DS®	CDV Software	●●○
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Justice for All	Capcom	●●○
Princess Natasha: Student, Secret Agent, Princess	Destination	●●○
Puzzle de Harvest Moon	Natsume	●●○
Quad Desert Fury 2	Majesco	●○○
Rayman Raving Rabbids	Ubisoft	●●○
Scurge: Hive	SouthPeak	●●○
Shrek Smash and Crash Racing	Activision	●●○
The Sims 2 Pets	EA	●●●
SNK vs. Capcom Card Fighters DS	SNK	●●○
Spectrobes	Buena Vista	●●○
Spider-Man: Battle for New York	Activision	●●○
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	Ubisoft	●●○
Steel Horizon	Konami	●●○
Strawberry Shortcake: Strawberryland Games	American Game Factory	●●○
Superman Returns: The Videogame	EA	●●○
Tamagotchi Connection: Corner Shop 2	Namco Bandai	●●●
Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam	Activision	●●●
Top Gear: Downforce	Kemco	●●○
Totally Spies! 2: Undercover	Atari	●●○
Ultimate Brain Games	Telegames	●○○
Ultimate Card Games	Telegames	●●○
Ultimate Pocket Games	Telegames	●○○
Undercover: Dual Motives	Anaconda	●○○
Winning Eleven: Pro Evolution Soccer 2007	Konami	●●○
Winx Club: The Quest for the Codex	Konami	●●●
Xiaolin Showdown	Konami	●●○
Yoshi's Island DS	Nintendo	●●●
Yu-Gi-Oh!: Spirit Caller	Konami	●●○
Zendoku	Eidos	●●○

Announced
In Development
Ready for Release

Game Title — Publisher ●●●

Game Title — Publisher ●●● — New games added to the list

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

Game Title	Publisher	●●●
Backyard Baseball 2007	Atari	●●○
Backyard Basketball 2007	Atari	●○○
Backyard Football 2007	Atari	●○○
Bionicle Heroes	Eidos	●●●
Foodfight!	Global Star	●●○
Happy Feet	Midway	●●●
The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess	Nintendo	●●○
Mini-Golf Mayhem	Crave	●○○
Need for Speed: Carbon	EA	●●●
Shrek Smash & Crash Racing	Activision	●●○
The Sims 2 Pets	EA	●●●
Tomb Raider: Legend	Eidos	●●●
World Championship Poker	Crave	●●○
Zatch Bell!: Mamodo Fury	Namco Bandai	●●●

GAME BOY ADVANCE

Game Title	Publisher	●●●
Arthur and the Invisibles	Atari	●●○
ATV: Thunder Ridge Riders	Destination	●●○
Barbie Diaries: High School Mystery	Activision	●●●
Barbie in the 12 Dancing Princesses	Activision	●●○
Bionicle Heroes	Eidos	●●○
Camp Lazlo: Leaky Lake Game	Crave	●●○
Charlotte's Web	Sega	●●○
Danny Phantom: Urban Jungle	THQ	●●○
Disney Princess: Royal Adventure	Buena Vista	●●○
Dora's World Adventure	Global Star	●●●
Eragon	Vivendi	●●○
F-24 Stealth Fighter	Majesco	●●●
Family Feud	Global Star	●●○
Final Fantasy VI Advance	Nintendo	●●○
Foodfight!	Global Star	●●○
Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends	Crave	●●○
The Grim Adventures of Billy & Mandy	Midway	●●○
Happy Feet	Midway	●●○
Hardcore Pool	Telegames	●●○
Harlem Globetrotters: World Tour	Destination	●●●
Hot Wheels: All Out	Destination	●●○
Hugo: Bukkazoom	Namco Bandai	●●○
Juka & The Monophonic Menace	SouthPeak	●●○
Justice League Heroes: Koala Brothers: Outback Adventures	American Game Factory	●●○
Legend of the River King Advance	Natsume	●●○
Little Einsteins	Buena Vista	●●○
March of the Penguins	Destination	●●○
Meet the Robinsons	Buena Vista	●○○
Mega Man Anniversary Collection	Capcom	●●○
Metal Slug	SNK	●●○
Monster Truck Mayhem	Destination	●●○
My Little Pony: Crystal Princess—The Runaway Rainbow	THQ	●○○
Need for Speed: Carbon	EA	●●○
Pirate Battle	Orbital	●●○
The Proud Family	Disney	●●○
Santa Claus Saves the Earth	Telegames	●●○
Scurge: Hive	SouthPeak	●●○
Shrek Smash and Crash Racing	Activision	●●○
The Sims 2 Pets	EA	●●●
Sonic the Hedgehog Genesis	Sega	●●●
Spider-Man: Battle for New York	Activision	●●○
The Suite Life of Zack & Cody	Buena Vista	●○○
Super Robot Monkey Team Hyperforce Go!	Disney	●○○
Super Robot Taisen: Original Generation 2	Atlus	●●●
Superman Returns: The Videogame	EA	●●○
Teen Titans 2	Majesco	●●●
Tonka on the Job	THQ	●○○
Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam	Activision	●●○
Totally Spies! 2: Undercover	Atari	●●○
Ultimate Pocket Games	Telegames	●●○
Ultimate Puzzle Games	Telegames	●●○
Ultimate Table Games	Telegames	●●○
Uno 52	Destination	●●●
Uno Freefall	Destination	●●●
VeggieTales: LarryBoy and the Bad Apple	Crave	●●○
Winx Club: The Quest for the Codex	Konami	●●○
W.I.T.C.H.	Buena Vista	●○○
World Poker Tour 2K6	2K Sports	●○○
World Reborn	Destination	●●○
X-Bladez: Inline Skater	Crave	●●○
Xyanide	Playlogic	●○○
Yggdra Union	Atlus	●●●

* Tentative title

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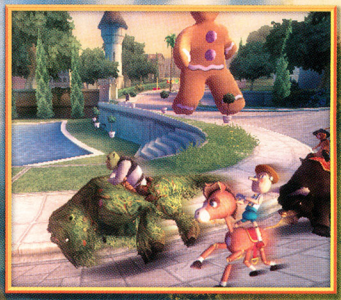

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SUPER SMASH BROS. Brawl

Wii SMASH FILES #06

PIKACHU

FIRST GAME APPEARANCE:
Pokémon Red and Blue - Game Boy (1996); US: Game Boy Camera - Game Boy (1998)

KNOWN FOR:
Saying only its name, frying Water- and Flying-type opponents, being really cutesy-patootsie

BIOGRAPHY:
As the chief mascot of the Pokémon franchise, Pikachu has just about done it all: television, movies, comic books, card games . . . you name it. But the cuddly little creature is best known for its ubiquitous role in the video game series—the Electric-type has been in every Pokémon game ever made, and has had starring roles in Pokémon Special Pikachu Edition for Game Boy Color and Hey You, Pikachu! for N64. When it comes to Smash Bros., Pikachu is anything but cute, however—its light-speed movements and assortment of electrifying moves make it one of the toughest foes in the game. A little trivia: Pikachu's name comes from a combination of two Japanese onomatopoeias: "pika" is a sound that represents sparkling bright light, and "chu" is the "squeak squeak" noise that mice make.

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The DS continues its handheld domination. Ninjas, Jiminy Cricket, PIs, and more are coming in 2007.

Hotel Dusk: Room 215 Pg. 30
Inuyasha: Secret of the Divine Jewel Pg. 32
Izuna: Legend of the Unemployed Ninja Pg. 35
Meteos: Disney Magic Pg. 32
Spectrobes Pg. 34
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance Pg. 31
Super Swing Golf Pg. 34
Winning Eleven: Pro Evolution Soccer 2007 Pg. 31

A Novel Approach

> HOTEL DUSK: ROOM 215

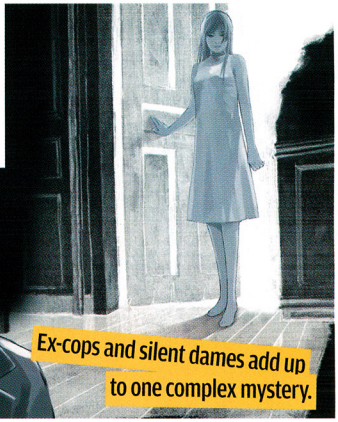
PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: CING • RELEASE: JANUARY 2007

Everyone's got a secret in Hotel Dusk. The bellhop's an ex-con, one of the guests is a young woman who won't speak, and another guest's mother disappeared under curious circumstances. Protagonist Kyle Hyde isn't exactly the door-to-door salesman he appears to be, either; he's a former NYPD officer who helps his employer find lost valuables, all the while hoping to cross paths with his missing ex-partner. Even the hotel itself has its share of secrets—rumor has it that the place has been haunted ever since an unresolved kidnapping occurred there 10 years prior.

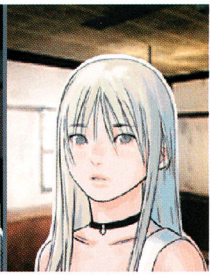
Fans of developer Cing's previous DS offering, Trace Memory, will feel right at home with Hotel Dusk's inventive brand of mystery-solving. As in Trace Memory, the DS's touch screen acts as a 2-D map that lets you easily explore your surroundings, while the additional screen provides a first-person view of the area. Hotel Dusk, however, takes the concept even further, with fully polygonal 3-D environments and a much more mature narrative. The game also turns the formula literally on its side: you rotate the DS 90 degrees to play the game, with the touch screen on the right and the first-person perspective on the left (or vice versa if you opt for the left-handed configuration). You'll hold the DS much like you would a graphic novel—a perfect fit for the game's sketch-style art.

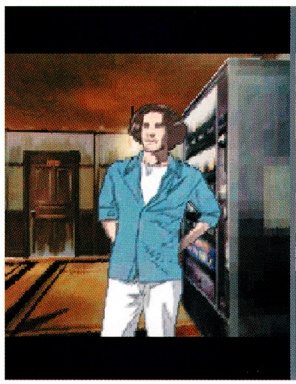
As you navigate the hotel's run-down rooms and hallways, you'll have plenty of opportunities to interact with the environment and with NPCs. When you encounter particularly interesting areas, you can click on the magnifying-glass icon to prompt further investigation—if you're lucky, you'll find a new item for your inventory. You'll get to use the touch screen and microphone for a variety of activities as well: flipping switches, opening locks, blowing away dust, and much more. Likewise, when you bump into another guest, you can touch the talk icon to engage in conversation. Unlike some adventure games, the dialogue really matters in Hotel Dusk; say the wrong thing and your stay could come to an end real quick.

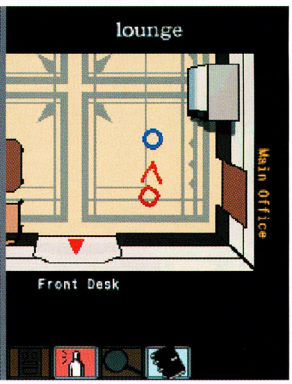
The game's namesake hotel may be a bit dilapidated, but for gamers awaiting a stylized DS mystery, it's more promising than a five-star resort.
—CHRIS H.



Ex-cops and silent dames add up to one complex mystery.





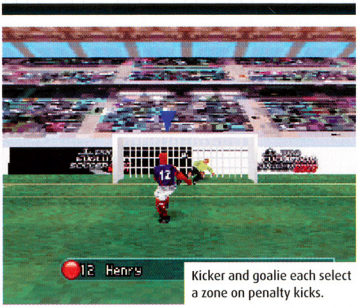


Konami's Eleven

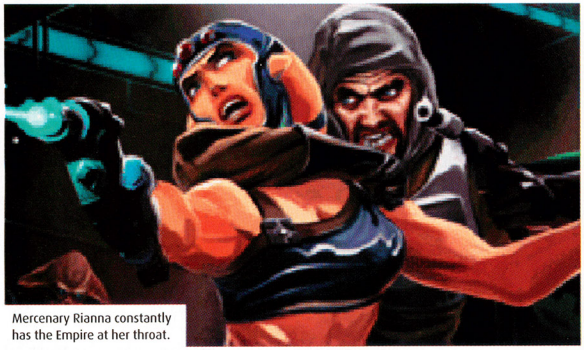
>WINNING ELEVEN: PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2007

PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: KONAMI
DEVELOPER: KONAMI • RELEASE: JANUARY 2007

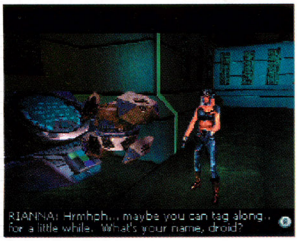
There's a new challenger to the title of soccer star on Nintendo systems, and this one is Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection-enabled. Konami's well-respected Winning Eleven franchise will give EA's FIFA series a run for its money on the DS this winter. Though Winning Eleven: Pro Evolution Soccer 2007 doesn't have the extensive squad selection of FIFA 2007 (just ten club teams, including Parma and Manchester United, and the usual assortment of country-represented squads), it does allow you to build your own team and trade athletes with other Winning Eleven players. In World Tour mode, victories earn you coins that you can use in the game's Gotcha-Get machine, which dispenses new players. The more you win, the bigger your reserve roster gets. The game's on-field play is every bit as robust as that of its more-established competitor. Long, short, chip, and through passes ensure that you'll keep the ball moving. And a simple defensive scheme lets you put pressure on the other side with the push of a button. Touch control lets you set aggressiveness and aim penalty kicks. Games are short but scoring is frequent, making for final tallies that are like those of real life matches. —GEORGE S.



Kicker and goalie each select a zone on penalty kicks.



Mercenary Rianna constantly has the Empire at her throat.



War Buddies

>STAR WARS: LETHAL ALLIANCE

PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT CASABLANCA
RELEASE: DECEMBER 2006

After Anakin becomes Darth Vader and before Luke leaves Tatooine, there are a lot of Star Wars stories to be told. In Lethal Alliance, which takes place between movie episodes III and IV, Twi'lek mercenary Rianna Saren finds herself fighting the Empire in the name of the burgeoning Rebel movement. At her side is security droid Z-58-0 (Zeeo for short) who acts as a shield and a vehicle for the stormtrooper-blasting adventurer. When Zeeo stuns an enemy with an electric attack then Rianna finishes off the target, the pair receives a Team Alliance upgrade. Zeeo is also capable of hacking into computer systems (in touch-controlled minigames) to open doors and download maps, keeping the pair on the path to their goal. Most of the adventure, which takes place in Stars Wars locations well-known (Coruscant) and obscure (Despayre), is shown in third-person perspective, but Zeeo's solo missions and multiplayer deathmatches are displayed in first-person perspective. The action will heat up by the end of this year. —GEORGE S.

Dog Days

>INUYASHA: SECRET OF THE DIVINE JEWEL

PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI
DEVELOPER: FRONTIER GROOVE
RELEASE: FEBRUARY 2007

Like many shonen manga (Japanese boys' comics) and the anime they have spawned, Rumiko Takahashi's Inuyasha has found a receptive audience among female fans in the US—a fact that may have influenced Namco Bandai when they made an American girl named Janis—a friend of the manga's protagonist, Kagome—the main playable character in Inuyasha: Secret of the Divine Jewel. If you're grinding your teeth at the prospect of controlling a teenage girl in an RPG filled with cool demon characters, go sip some green tea and cool your jets: your party will get fleshed out soon enough with the star players from the franchise. The biggest star is, of course, Inuyasha himself, a kind-of reverse-werewolf, half-dog demon who becomes just another wimpy human during full moons (a helpful moon-phase indicator on the touch screen warns you when that will happen). If Secret of the Divine Jewel seems lightweight for a Japanese RPG, that's probably the point. The stylus-driven, tap-to-attack control scheme and wordy, linear storyline seem tailor-made for fans of the series who may be newbies to the world of turn-based fighting. —DREW W.

Sword or no sword, it's time for a flea dip.

Could this be the Kingdom Hearts of puzzle games?

Classics Collide

>METEOS: DISNEY MAGIC

PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: BUENA VISTA GAMES
DEVELOPER: Q ENTERTAINMENT • RELEASE: FEBRUARY 2007

Classic DS puzzler Meteos is getting a well-deserved sequel early next year courtesy of Buena Vista Games. The basic objective remains the same: line up three or more blocks of the same color to make them (and the blocks above them) blast off toward the top of the screen. But as the name suggests, the sci-fi trappings of the original game have been replaced by a Disney theme, with levels based on such films as *The Lion King*, *Toy Story*, *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, and *The Little Mermaid*. The follow-up also features a couple of significant gameplay differences. First, you play the game by holding the DS sideways: the touch screen serves as the playfield, while the story unfolds on the opposite screen. More importantly, you can now move blocks horizontally (the original restricted you to shifting blocks up and down). That means frantic scribbling should no longer be an effective "tactic" during four-player matches. —STEVE T.

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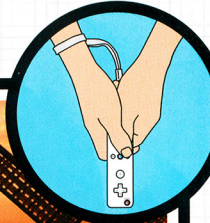
The Swing's the Thing

>SUPER SWING GOLF

PLATFORM: Wii • PUBLISHER: Tecmo
DEVELOPER: Tecmo • RELEASE: December 2006

Tecmo's upcoming Wii golf title takes a distinctly arcade-style approach, but thanks to the controls, it may be the most authentic representation of the sport ever to hit a home console. You begin by holding the Wii remote pointed down as you would a golf club. As you pull back the controller, the power bar on the bottom of the screen rises. Once the bar is at the desired strength, you hold down the A Button and take your shot. The game reads the trajectory of your swing to determine if you hooked or sliced, as well as the speed to calculate how far the ball travels; if you swing too fast, you'll overpower the shot and send it farther than intended. Swing too slow, and you'll come up short. That may sound daunting, but Tecmo seems to have found the sweet spot—the game feels convincing yet immediately accessible even for someone who (like me) has never picked up a club in real life. Success in single-player mode will earn you cash that you can use to purchase new equipment and apparel, including costumes from Ninja Gaiden and Dead or Alive. —Steve T.



Some of Super Swing's courses are breathtaking.

First some exploration, then some excavation.

Fossil Fueled

>SPECTROBES

PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: Buena Vista Games
DEVELOPER: Jupiter • RELEASE: March 2007

The Krawl are a nasty bunch. The amoeba-like aliens are known for infesting a solar system, devouring everything in their path, then moving on and repeating the cycle. The only thing that can stop them: extinct creatures known as Spectrobes. As Rallen, a member of an intergalactic peace-keeping force, it's up to you and your partner Jeena to reawaken the Spectrobes in a galaxy-spanning action-RPG. While you're exploring the game's seven planets—each with a different environment such as forest, desert, ice, or industry—you must locate buried Spectrobe fossils and excavate them using the touch screen, first by tapping away layers of rock, then by using implements like drills and solvent. Once you've revived the Spectrobes and evolved them into mature form (using crystals, which you must also excavate), two of them can accompany you in real-time combat against the Krawl. With 50 types of Spectrobes spanning three classes (flash, aurora, and corona), plenty of character-customization options, and the ability to issue more-complex battle commands as your Spectrobes level up, the game puts the survival of the galaxy in your hands. Expect Spectrobes to feature Wi-Fi battling and trading, as well. —Chris H.

Get to Work

>IZUNA: LEGEND OF THE UNEMPLOYED NINJA

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS • PUBLISHER: ATLUS
DEVELOPER: SUCCESS • RELEASE: FEBRUARY 2007

We gotta admit, the game title alone is enough to draw attention to this precocious little dungeon-crawling action-RPG. Settling somewhere between Pokémon Mystery Dungeon, Shinobi, and Lizzie McGuire, Legend of the Unemployed Ninja feels both fresh and familiar.

The eponymous heroine is an impudent little drifter who somehow manages to get herself in trouble—a lot. When she and her traveling companions happen upon a quiet little village in the middle of nowhere, it's not long before she turns the entire place against her. When Izuna loots the local shrine of its prized possession, she angers the gods protecting the town. Before she's allowed to leave, she has to visit the deities and restore peace to the community.

The top-down, turn-based gameplay features an intricate combat system that has a lot of unique aspects. And the game sports a pretty tough difficulty curve—don't expect to sail through even the starting dungeon your first time. We've barely scratched the surface of this lengthy adventure, but we get the feeling it's more extensive than a ninja training regimen. —CHRIS S.

Rest assured, their friendship is purely platonic.

We're hoping for a sequel about unemployed pirates.

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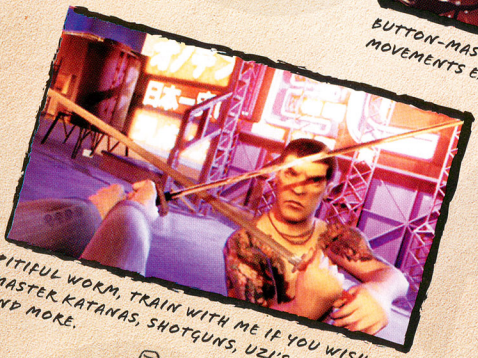

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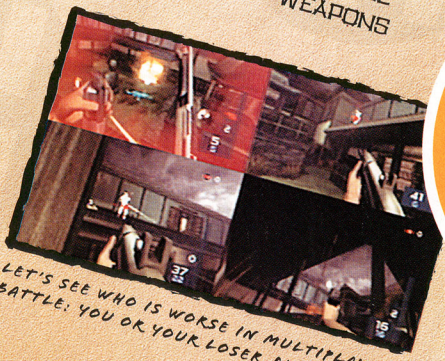

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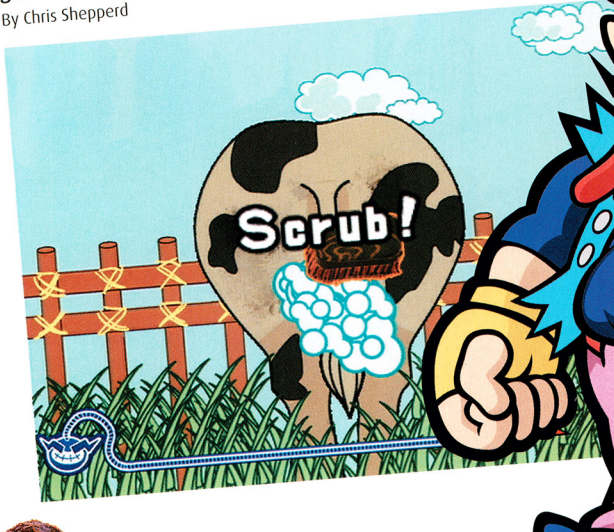
ALL THE RIGHT MOVES

Wario's newest microgame medley, **WarioWare: Smooth Moves**, will have you using the Wii remote in more ways than you can imagine. Get up on your feet and check out the game's most outrageous poses and gestures.

By Chris Shepperd



The Remote Control

The microgames in Smooth Moves start out pretty basic, and for the first rounds you'll use only the Remote Control form. It may not look like the most exciting position, but the multitude of microgames that use the Remote Control form make it a very versatile pose. It features a lot of challenging microgames that require you to jab the Wii remote toward the television.

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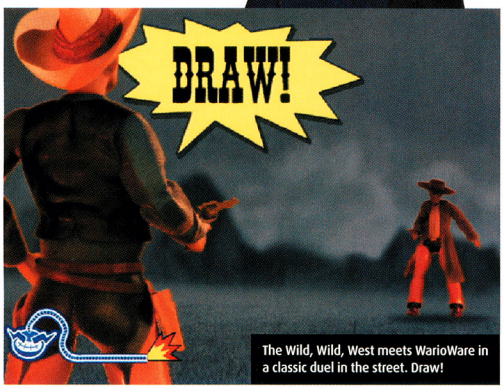
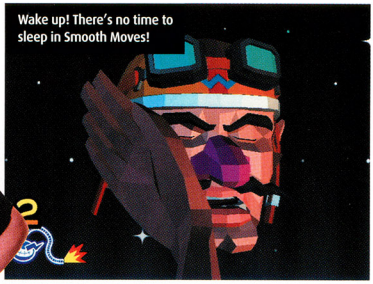
The Big Cheese

Posing with your hands on your hips might make you appear standoffish, but a couple of deep knee bends or hula-hoop convulsions is sure to win you some favor. The Big Cheese form will have you rocking your hips all over your living room, much to the delight of onlookers.



Can Shooter

Target-shooting at the county fair is fun and all, but it's not much of a challenge since the ducks don't shoot back. In addition to all the microgames, Smooth Moves features several more-robust minigames. In Can Shooter, you attempt to blast the targets that zip across the screen while watching for a variety of projectiles coming right at you.



The Samurai

The way of the true warrior begins before the weapon has been drawn; that is the pose of the Samurai form. For most of the Samurai form's microgames, you must strike first and strike hard by swinging the remote up and across your body in one quick motion—check your wrist strap and hold on tight, or watch your Wii remote sail through the air.

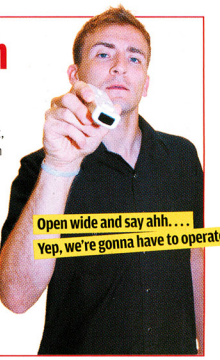
The Elephant

One of the best features of Smooth Moves doesn't involve gameplay—it's the fun of watching others make total fools of themselves. The Elephant form is guaranteed to make you look silly, so ham it up for the other people playing with you. And remember to laugh at them when it's their turn to look goofy.

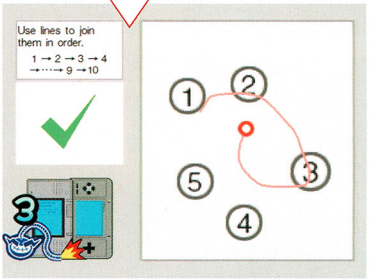
Look sharp! Your Mii will show up in several of the microgames.

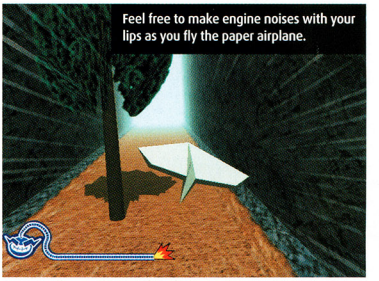
The Sketch Artist

The next Picasso you ain't, but the Sketch Artist form will bring out your expressive side. Even though you hold the remote like you would a pen, you'll use the grip for all kinds of different techniques, such as flying a paper airplane or tossing darts.

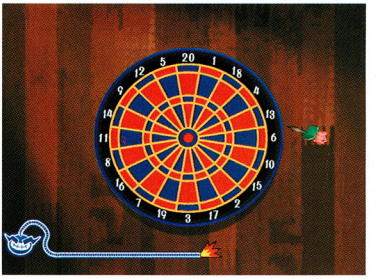


Open wide and say ahh. . . . Yep, we're gonna have to operate.



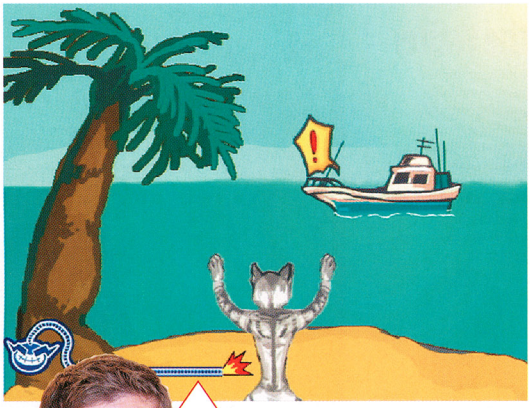


Feel free to make engine noises with your lips as you fly the paper airplane.



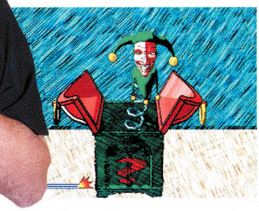
Balloon Trip

When we first started speculating about Wii's many applications, admittedly a Balloon Fight remake wasn't at the top of our list. After playing the Balloon Trip minigame, though, we've seen the light. Using both the remote and the nunchuk, you pump your arms to fly over, under, and around all kinds of obstacles. Keep going—if you stop, you'll plunge to your doom.



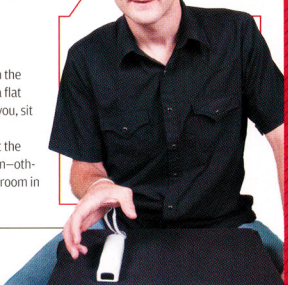
The Diner

The Diner form is the only one that requires the nunchuk. The Diner form encompasses several different poses, including pointing the tips of the remote and the nunchuk at each other in front of you. All of the Diner-form microgames are in one place, so you won't have to plug and unplug the nunchuk repeatedly.



The Discard

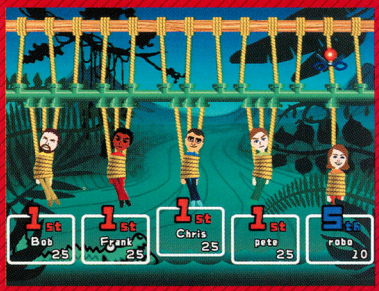
As far as we can recall, we've never had to set down the controller to play a game. The Discard form needs a flat surface—if you don't have a coffee table in front of you, sit down and use your knee. In the Discard form's microgames, you must snatch up the remote at just the right moment. Remember to keep the wrist strap on—otherwise you're likely to throw the remote across the room in the rush to pick it up quickly.



Multiplayer Modes

As much fun as it is to swing your arms like a chimp all by yourself, it's even more fun in the company of friends. Four multiplayer competitions pit up to 12 players against each other; you'll take a crack at a microgame, then pass the Wii remote to the next opponent like a hot potato.

In Survival mode it's simply win and advance, or lose and be eliminated. Be ready to strike any pose the game offers.



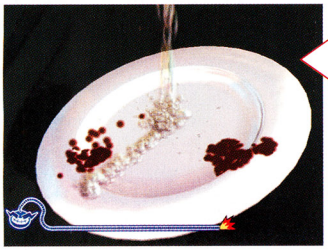
In Lifeline mode, you and your opponents take turns playing microgames for points. At the end, the person with the most points has the best chance of staying alive when you take turns cutting the vines that suspend you over a croc-filled swamp.

If you didn't get enough dart-throwing action in the Sketch Artist microgame, you can enjoy a full round of 301 with your friends.

Smooth Moves maintains the WarioWare tradition of drawing inspiration from other Nintendo games.

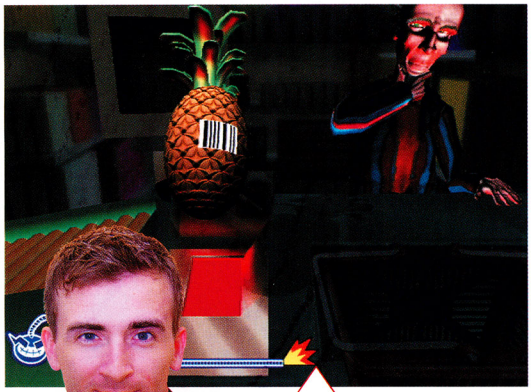
The Waiter

In the typical frenzied action of WarioWare games, it's hard to stay calm. But that's exactly what you have to do in the Waiter form—gently balance the Wii remote in your hand like you're carrying a tray (and try to keep your heart rate from going off the charts).



Block Star

It takes a steady hand and zenlike patience to succeed in Block Star, minigame. You must pile up odd-shaped blocks that fall from the top of the screen onto a small platform. If even one falls off before they've all landed on the board, it's game over and you have to try again. There are 50 stages, each one sure to drive you even crazier than the previous one.



The Mohawk

The Mohawk form will have you doing your best Mr. T. impression. Hold the Wii remote on top of your head with both hands, then let your body do all the work by jumping, ducking and twisting.

I pity the fool who tries to take my Wii Remote!

Now that's what we call using your head.

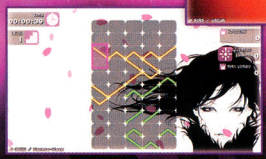
How am I doin'? I just got my permit yesterday.

The Chauffeur

As the name implies, the Chauffeur form has you holding the Wii remote like a steering wheel. But the Chauffeur isn't just for a bunch of vehicle-driving levels—be prepared to shake, twist, and turn the remote every which way.

GENIUS LOVES COMPANY!

"...both games are unique in style and play, you might even want to pick both up."
– IGN

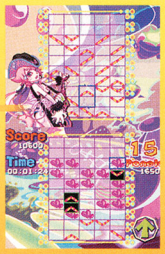


Connect lines of various shapes in never ending combinations!

Unlock 40 vibrant skins and pulsating music tracks!

Six modes which include Challenge, 10x10, Time Attack and Wireless VS.

"...Gunpey is a blast to play..."
– GameSpot



9 characters in 5 modes of endless action!

Create original music by using the Sounds Sets and Patternizer!

Share a demo with a friend!

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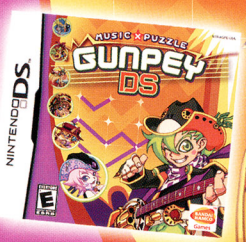

PRODUCTS RANGE FROM EVERYONE TO EVERYONE 10+
E-E 10+
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Crude Humor

PlayStation.Portable

NINTENDO DS.

GAMES

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31 Reasons Why Wii Love the Virtual Console

Nintendo delivers on its promise with an awesome list of launch-window classics for Wii.

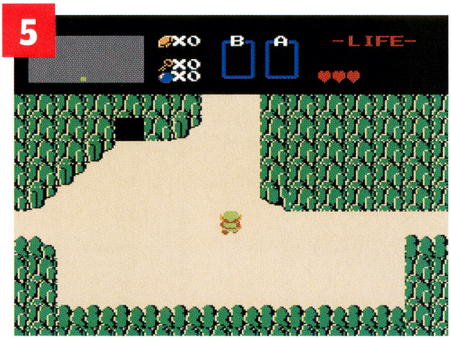
Wii owners have a lot to be excited about this holiday season. In addition to what is arguably the greatest launch-window lineup in console history, they'll have access to a classic-gaming cornucopia by way of the Virtual Console. The Virtual Console is a built-in Wii feature that allows you to play games that were originally created for the Nintendo Entertainment System, Super Nintendo, Sega Genesis, TurboGrafx-16, and Nintendo 64. And the best part is that you never have to leave your living room. With Wii's free online service, every Virtual Console title can be downloaded directly from the Wii Shop Channel using Wii Points (available online or at retail for an MSRP of $20 for 2,000 points). Wii Points spent on downloads may vary, but initially you can expect to pony up 500 points for NES games, 800 points for Super NES games, 1,000 points for Nintendo 64 games, 800 points for Sega Genesis games, and 600 points for TurboGrafx-16 games. There are 31 Virtual Console titles slated for release within the Wii launch window, and that's only the beginning—many more titles from various publishers are in the works. Read on for a sampling of what's in store for Virtual Console, and let the retro-gaming revival begin!

Three Ways to Take Control

Platform	Wii Remote	Classic Controller	GCN Controller
NES	YES	YES	YES
SNES	NO	YES	YES
N64	NO	YES	YES
GENESIS	SOME	YES	UNDETERMINED
TURBOGRAFX-16	YES	YES	UNDETERMINED

	Virtual Console Title	Platform/Publisher	Original Release
1	BASEBALL	NES NINTENDO	1985
2	DONKEY KONG	NES NINTENDO	1986
3	DONKEY KONG JR.	NES NINTENDO	1986
4	ICE HOCKEY	NES NINTENDO	1988
5	THE LEGEND OF ZELDA	NES NINTENDO	1987
6	MARIO BROS.	NES NINTENDO	1986
7	PINBALL	NES NINTENDO	1985
8	SOCCER	NES NINTENDO	1987
9	TENNIS	NES NINTENDO	1985
10	URBAN CHAMPION	NES NINTENDO	1986
11	WARIO'S WOODS	NES NINTENDO	1994
12	SOLOMON'S KEY	NES TECMO	1987
13	F-ZERO	SUPER NES NINTENDO	1992
14	SIMCITY	SUPER NES NINTENDO	1991
15	SUPER MARIO 64	NINTENDO 64 NINTENDO	1996
16	SONIC THE HEDGEHOG	SEGA GENESIS SEGA	1991
17	ALTERED BEAST	SEGA GENESIS SEGA	1989
18	GOLDEN AXE	SEGA GENESIS SEGA	1989
19	COLUMNS	SEGA GENESIS SEGA	1990
20	ECCO THE DOLPHIN	SEGA GENESIS SEGA	1992
21	GUNSTAR HEROES	SEGA GENESIS SEGA	1993
22	SPACE HARRIER II	SEGA GENESIS SEGA	1989
23	TOEJAM & EARL	SEGA GENESIS SEGA	1991
24	RISTAR	SEGA GENESIS SEGA	1995
25	DR. ROBOTNIK'S MEAN BEAN MACHINE	SEGA GENESIS SEGA	1993
26	BOMBERMAN '93	TURBOGRAFX-16 HUDSON	1993
27	BONK'S ADVENTURE	TURBOGRAFX-16 NEC/HUDSON	1990
28	DUNGEON EXPLORER	TURBOGRAFX-16 NEC/HUDSON	1989
29	R-TYPE	TURBOGRAFX-16 NEC/HUDSON	1989
30	SUPER STAR SOLDIER	TURBOGRAFX-16 NEC/HUDSON	1990
31	VICTORY RUN	TURBOGRAFX-16 NEC/HUDSON	1989

5 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA (1987)



PLATFORM: NES
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
TYPE: ADVENTURE

A nice capper to your journey through Twilight Princess, the first Legend of Zelda title is short on story but long on adventure. Though the series has enjoyed huge advancements in the 20 years since Link first donned the green cap, the dungeon-crawling basics are all there, and the experience is surprisingly deep. And just when you think it's over, you have the second quest!

10 URBAN CHAMPION (1986)

PLATFORM: NES
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
TYPE: FIGHTING

Way before the fighting-game craze of the early '90s, Urban Champion taught gamers the basics of one-on-one combat. The most important lessons: keep your guard up, watch out for falling flowerpots, and stay away from open manholes. Obey these tenets, or risk falling into the sewer while your opponent performs a goofy dance.

SOLOMON'S KEY (1987)

PLATFORM: NES
PUBLISHER: TECMO
TYPE: PUZZLE ACTION

Featuring the block-building and block-blasting action of a hero named Dana, Solomon's Key was a fiendishly designed NES title released in 1987 by Tecmo. Room by room, players had to solve the riddles and survive the dangers of 50 chambers. Part puzzle and part action game, Solomon's Key could be both frustrating and rewarding, but it was always a challenge.

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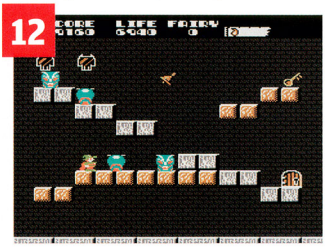

13 F-ZERO (1991)

PLATFORM: SUPER NES
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
GAME TYPE: RACING

Captain Falcon is so much more than a seldom-used Super Smash Bros. character—he's always been the top dog on the F-Zero circuit. Rocket back to the future, where you can experience the majesty of 3-D-ish effects on a 2-D system through the miracle of Mode 7 texture mapping. Groundbreaking in its day, F-Zero still seems blindingly fast in this gee-whiz era of "hybrids."

SUPER MARIO 64 (1996)

PLATFORM: NINTENDO 64
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
GAME TYPE: PLATFORMER

The hoopla surrounding the launch of the N64 in 1996 was as much about the release of Super Mario 64 as it was about the powerful new hardware. As the first free-roaming, 3-D platform adventure, Super Mario 64 set the benchmark for virtually every 3-D adventure that followed. Miraculously, the game still felt like a Mario title, full of collectible items, attackable baddies, and secrets galore.

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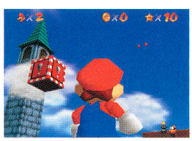

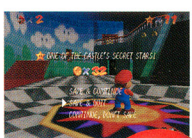

18 GOLDEN AXE (1989)

PLATFORM: SEGA GENESIS
PUBLISHER: SEGA
TYPE: ACTION

Golden Axe provides fantasy co-op action at its finest: Ride atop fire-breathing dragons, cross the skies on the back of an enormous eagle, and wield blades and magic to tear through Death Adder's legions and reclaim the sacred Golden Axe. With two exclusive new levels, the home version of Golden Axe is arguably better than the coin-op.

20 ECCO THE DOLPHIN (1992)

PLATFORM: SEGA GENESIS
PUBLISHER: SEGA
TYPE: ADVENTURE

Ecco offers an interesting take on the side-scrolling formula. Swimming through the ocean gives the titular dolphin greater freedom of movement than his terrestrial counterparts, and strong puzzle-solving elements set it apart from your typical shooter or platformer. The game also boasts some stunning animation, considering its age.

GUNSTAR HEROES (1993)

PLATFORM: SEGA GENESIS
PUBLISHER: SEGA
TYPE: ACTION

Kudos to Sega for including the relatively obscure Gunstar Heroes in the company's initial batch of Virtual Console offerings. Developed by the action maestros at Treasure, this cult favorite dishes up an innovative combo-based weapon system, a fantastic two-player co-op mode, and some of the greatest boss fights of the 16-bit era.

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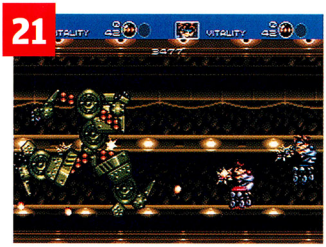

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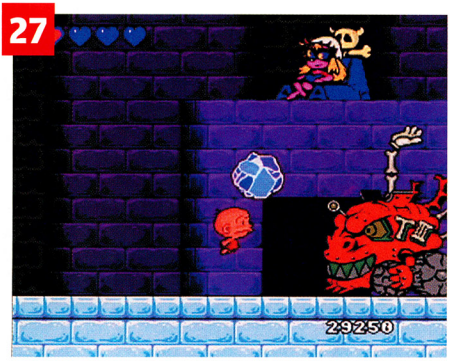

BONK'S ADVENTURE (1990)

PLATFORM: TURBOGRAFX-16
PUBLISHER: NEC/HUDSON
TYPE: PLATFORMER

The exploits of hard-headed caveman Bonk deliver the same flavor of top-tier platforming fun as rival 16-bit mascots Mario and Sonic, but do so with prehistoric flair and a unique set of game mechanics. Bonk literally uses his head to clobber his foes and navigate the game's wild worlds—including the inside of a dinosaur.

23

TOEJAM & EARL (1991)

PLATFORM: SEGA GENESIS
PUBLISHER: SEGA
TYPE: ADVENTURE

Although never quite popular enough to be Sega's mascots, ToeJam & Earl starred in an adventure that was out of this world. The two-player co-op experience was nothing short of amazing, and it remains unparalleled to this day. Add one of the strongest casts of enemies (including the Nerdherd and Insane Dentists) and the most funkadelic soundtrack known to man, and you have yourself one outstanding pick for the Virtual Console. Members of the NP crew still find themselves humming the theme song from time to time.

29

R-TYPE (1989)

PLATFORM: TURBOGRAFX-16
PUBLISHER: NEC/HUDSON
TYPE: SHOOTER

In the late '80s and early '90s there was a lot of buzz about arcade hits making the transition to home consoles, and no game fulfilled its potential as well as space-shooter R-Type. The game's basics are fairly simple—treading the same power-up-and-shoot territory as Gradius—but the giant warships and aliens of the Bydo Empire are something to behold. They still look great decades later.

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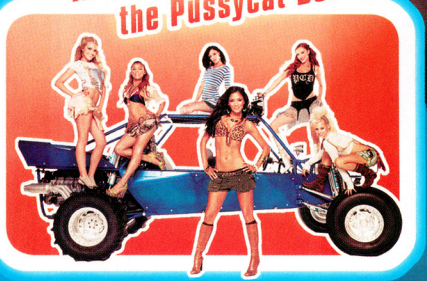

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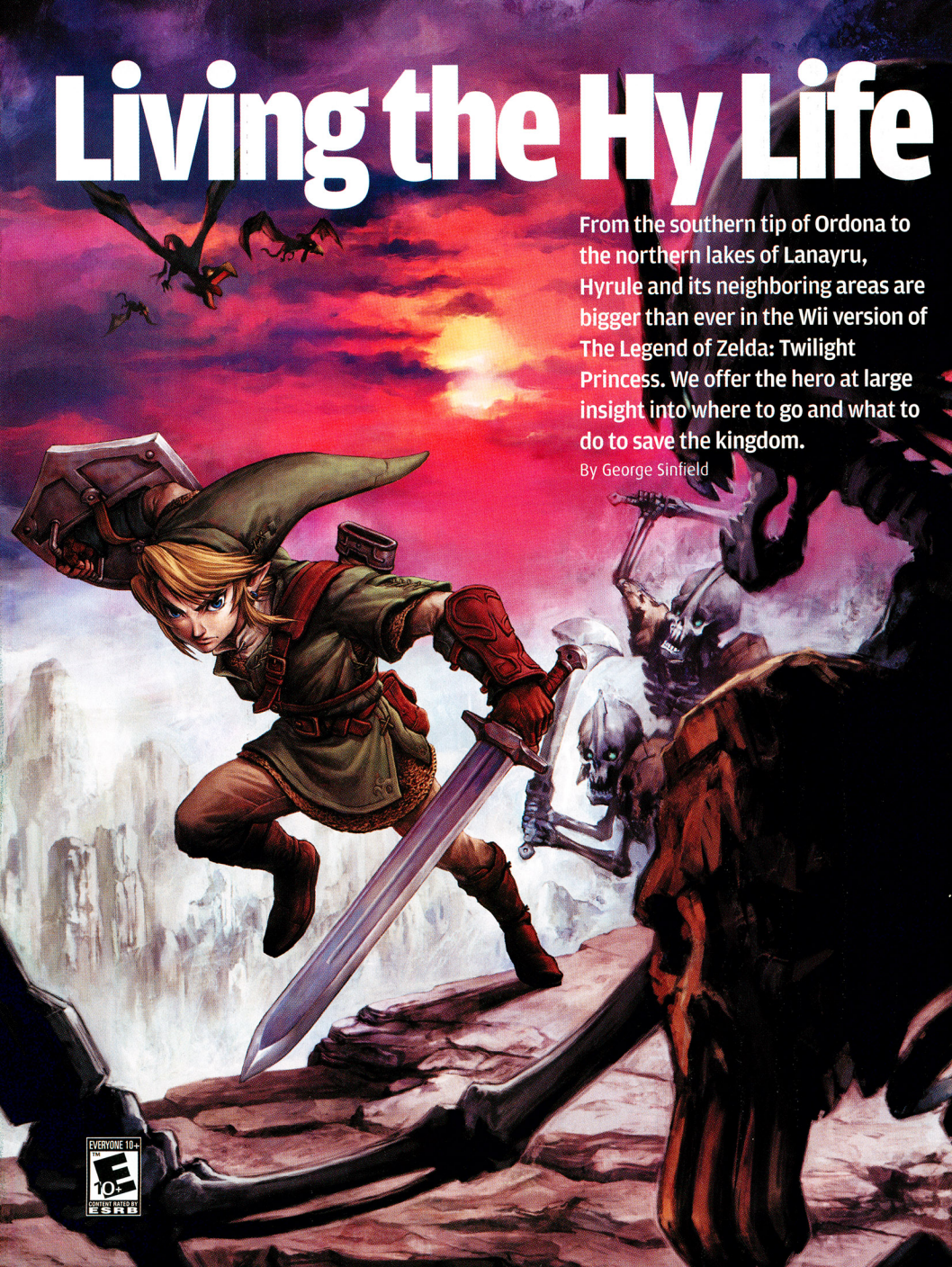
Living the Hy Life

From the southern tip of Ordona to the northern lakes of Lanayru, Hyrule and its neighboring areas are bigger than ever in the Wii version of The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess. We offer the hero at large insight into where to go and what to do to save the kingdom.

By George Sinfield



HYRULE HOT SPOTS

Even an adventurer destined to ward off evil forces that are flooding the world with darkness has to have a little fun now and again. As you explore, you'll find places in every part of the kingdom where you can show off your skills and earn prizes that equip you for the challenges ahead.

Ordon Village

Twilight Princess's Link starts as a goat herder in Ordon Village. You'll be tasked with guiding the herd into Fado's barn twice during the adventure. If you come back for a third try, you'll earn a Piece of Heart. Keep the goats between you and the barn and don't whoop too often.

Kakariko Village

You'll find interesting places to explore in the town south of Death Mountain before and after your adventure in Goron Mines. Buy a fire-resistant shield from Malo Mart on your way to the mines. Stop for explosives at Barnes Bomb Shop on your way back. Barnes will eventually sell you bombs of three varieties.

Loud Rock

You can earn two Pieces of Heart in south Kakariko Village with creative demolition. Hit a rock on a high ledge with a bomb arrow to expose a piece, then use the boomerang to collect it. Destroy a larger rock on the ground to open a path to a pool and another treasure.

Archery Challenge

On your return from the mines, enlist the help of Gorons to climb the tower at the north end of Kakariko Village. At the top, Talo will challenge you to a test of your archery skills. If you pass the test without aiming assistance, you'll earn a Piece of Heart. Afterward, visit Malo Mart to purchase the telescopic Hawkeye: the perfect implement for sniper missions.

Aim high and win big in Hyrule's minigames.

Lake Hylia and Zora's Domain

There's plenty to do in and over the lakes and rivers of Hyrule's watery region. The fun begins after you restore light to Lanayru Province. If you prefer the dark, you'll enjoy the winding cave south of Lake Hylia's Howling Stone. Stock up on bombs and Lantern Oil and go deep. You'll find Poes, rupees, and more.

Falbi's Flight-by-Fowl

Take Fyer's normal flight to Falbi's place high above the north end of Lake Hylia. There, Falbi will offer to rent you a Cucco for 20 rupees. Use the bird to glide through rupee symbols and to the prize platforms below—pull down on the Control Stick to slow down and push up to go faster. Treasures await you.

Fruit Pop Flight Challenge

Transform to your wolf form on the west shore of Lake Hylia and howl for a ride to the Zora's River area. By popping fruit balloons on the flight, you can earn points. The points increase exponentially with fruit-matching combos. Boost through tight spots and go for a line of strawberries to really clean up.

Iza's Rapid Ride

After you help Iza by clearing rocks on a boat trip through Upper Zora's River, the shopkeeper will offer a 20-rupee ride. Steer clear of obstacles and fire at targets when you're in open water. A good run will earn you the Giant Bomb Bag.

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Hyrule Castle Town

Once you've filled the third Vessel of Light, Castle Town will be full of life. In addition to shops, you'll find a man on the east road who accepts donations. After you give him 1,000 rupees, he'll offer you a Piece of Heart.

Invincibility at High Prices

After you give a Goron at Kakariko's Malo Mart 1,000 rupees to fix a bridge, then contribute another 2,000 rupees to overhaul the overpriced shop at the center of Castle Town, you'll be able to shop for Magic Armor in the new Malo Mart.

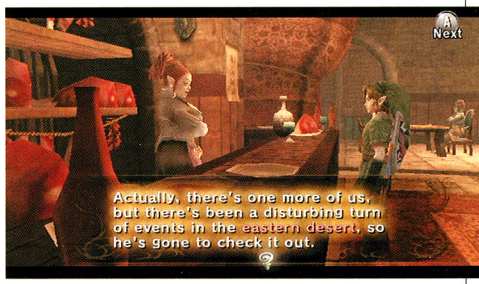
The Odd Collector

Queen of the bugs Agitha lives in southeastern Castle Town. She'll ask you to round up 24 Golden Bugs. Give her one bug to get the Big Wallet upgrade (600-rupee capacity) and all 24 bugs to get the Giant Wallet (1,000-rupee capacity).

Though you can enter the STAR minigame in east Castle Town before you visit Lakebed Temple, you'll find the temple's Clawshot to be invaluable in your pursuit of the game's glowing orbs. Grapple onto the cage wall to really fly. Victory earns you a 60-arrow quiver. Win again to score a 100-arrow quiver.

Fortune Smiles on You

Fortune teller Fanadi will offer you two types of fortunes for 10 rupees: If you ask her about your career, she'll point you to your next adventuring challenge. If you ask her about love, she'll steer you to a Piece of Heart.



Telma's Bar is an adventuring hub. Midway through your quest, you'll visit the watering hole on several occasions to track down a group of like-minded heroes. Speak to Telma about the issues at hand, then consult a map in the bar to look for the locations of your comrades.

Sledding at Snowpeak

After your adventure in Snowpeak Ruins, yetis Yeto and Yeta will challenge you to sledding races from the peak to the ruins. You'll put your racing skills to the test against Yeta. Push up on the Control Pad for extra speed. Push A to crouch, then release it to jump. A snowbank shortcut will put you in a position to win a Piece of Heart.

STOP FOR SOUVENIRS

With the future of Hyrule in jeopardy, it might seem trivial for you to go on a hunt for Golden Bugs and other collectibles, but the truth is that completing the game's three big item collections will help you in your quest. Take the time to search your surroundings for treasures big and small.

Golden Bugs

You'll find a lot of critters during your journeys through Hyrule, but none of them are quite like the shiny Golden Bugs. There are male-female pairs of 12 bug varieties in Hyrule Field and beyond. You can pick up many of them from the ground, but you'll need the Gale Boomerang to collect the flying ones. Agitha in Castle Town will offer you 50 rupees for the first bug in a pair and 100 rupees for its partner.

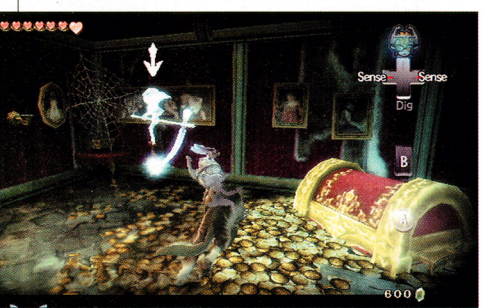
If you listen carefully when you're near a Golden Bug, you'll hear a faint hum. Look around to track it down.

Pieces of Heart

There are 45 Pieces of Heart scattered throughout the kingdom. About a third of them are hidden away in dungeons. The others are in caves, out in the open, or offered as rewards for your victories in minigames. For every five Pieces of Heart that you collect, you'll assemble a Heart Container and add to your line of hearts, allowing you to live longer while facing tremendous challenges.

Poe Souls

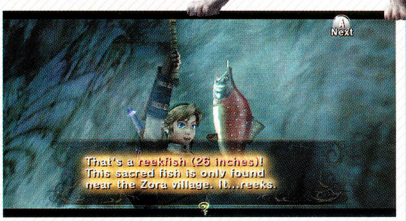
After your adventure in Lakebed Temple, you'll explore Castle Town at night in wolf form. Your journey through the rafters of Telma's Bar will lead you to the chamber of greedy Jovani who has lost his soul. Using your canine senses, you can track down Poes who have pieces of Jovani's soul. After you collect 20 souls, Jovani will give you a bottle full of Fairy Tears. Collect 60 souls for a rupee reward.



The first Poe Soul that you'll collect is in Jovani's chamber. Engage your senses to see the floating Poe, then attack. Once the Poe is on the ground, pounce on it to rip out its soul.

You Guide Me

One great thing about being able to turn into a wolf is enhanced canine senses. When you engage them, your field of vision will be limited but you will be able to see Poes, places to dig, and the trail of the most recent scent that you picked up.



After you collect the Coral Earring from Prince Ralis then fish for a Reekfish at the mother-and-child rocks below the waterfall in Zora's Domain, turn into a wolf to smell the fish and pick up its scent.

DIVE INTO DUNGEONS

Dungeons are the meat and potatoes of Legend of Zelda adventures. Twilight Princess features nine of them, each loaded with enemies, treasure, and ingenuous puzzles. Our whirlwind tour of the highlights reveals the weapons and tools you'll acquire in (or just before you reach) each dungeon.

Forest Temple

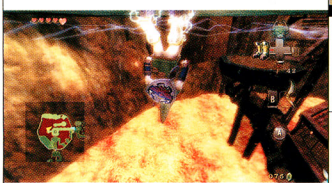
The first dungeon you'll explore is populated by several friendly monkeys and one possessed baboon. When you fight the baboon, wait for it to toss its boomerang, then run into the pole that it's standing on. After your third collision with the pole, the monkey will fall. The boomerang is your prize for victory.

A long-standing Legend of Zelda weapon, the boomerang has new qualities in Twilight Princess. Use the Gale Boomerang to target several items at once and carry objects, such as bombs, from one place to another. The tool's little tornados spin turnstiles and extinguish torches.

Weapon: Gale Boomerang

Goron Mines

Your adventure heats up in the Goron Mines. Use the weight of the Iron Boots to push floor switches and shut off flame jets temporarily, then take off the boots and run past the jets before they fire up again. Use the boots later to sink in a pool of water and walk on the bottom.



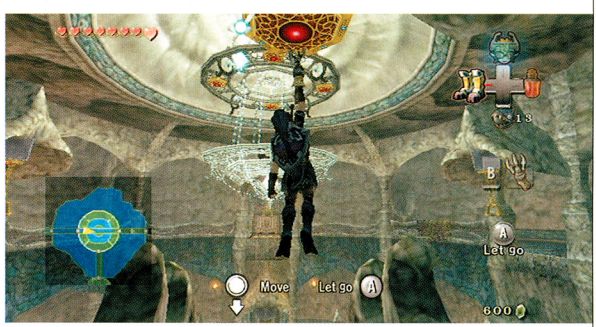
Some of the walls, ceilings, and cranes of the Goron Mines are magnetized. Use the Iron Boots to stick to the magnetic surfaces and walk over dangerous terrain.

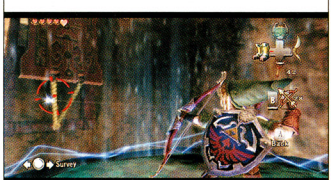
Tool: Iron Boots

Lakebed Temple

You'll collect the Zora Armor and Water Bombs before you venture into the briny deep of the Lakebed Temple. After a battle with a giant frog, you'll earn the Clawshot (a variation of the classic Hookshot). Use it to grapple onto objects, then raise and lower yourself with the Control Stick.

Tool: Clawshot





Your reward for defeating the dungeon's miniboss is the Hero's Bow. Use it to defeat enemies from a distance, cut ropes, and target the eyes of laser turrets.

Weapon: Hero's Bow

Arbiter's Grounds

The desert dwelling of Twilit Fossil Stallord is home to four mischievous Poes, an army of skeletons and invisible rats. Use your canine senses to detect the Poes, rats, and a swordsman in the basement's second level. Once the swordsman becomes visible, return to human form and hit him with arrows.

Tool: Spinner

Your prize for defeating the dungeon's invisible swordsman is the Spinner. Use it to move along tracks on the walls. Press A to jump off a track.

In your battle versus Stallord, you'll use the Spinner to swerve around his minions and hit the sand-stuck creature in the spine.

Snowpeak Ruins

Mad yeti Yeta will think that she's sending you off to collect a key in the icy ruins of Snowpeak, but she's really sending you after soup ingredients. The more ingredients you collect, the more hearts the soup will regenerate. Stock up before the big battle against (you guessed it) Yeta.

Weapon: Ball and Chain

The Darkhammer north of the courtyard will attack you with the ball and chain. Grapple over your foe and avoid its ball, then attack its tail with your sword.

After you defeat the Darkhammer, you'll get its weapon. Use the ball and chain to break through icy barriers and defeat huge beasts.

Temple of Time

The story of the Temple of Time involves a missing statue. After you defeat a knight in a room on the eighth floor, you'll earn the Dominion Rod, which you can use to bring life to certain objects, including the statue, which you'll find in the same room. Under your control, the statue can defeat enemies and break down barriers.

Tool: Dominion Rod

The midlevel knight is left-handed. Attack his right side. When his armor is gone, move around him quickly until he tries to attack, then counter.

City in the Sky

The tool that you'll earn in the City in the Sky is a Clawshot upgrade that lets you hold onto one grapple point while you grapple to another target. You'll earn the item by fighting a dragon that is equipped with a sword and shield. Grapple the creature's shield to pull the enemy to you.

Tool: Double Clawshots

Before you can deal damage to Twilit Dragon Argorok, you'll have to strip away its armor. Use the Double Clawshots to grapple onto a pillar, then target the creature's armored tail.

Palace of Twilight

A dark fog has fallen on the Palace of Twilight. After you retrieve two orbs—called Sols—that burn away the fog, you'll turn the Master Sword into the Light Sword and use it to clear your way. Spin attacks are particularly effective for burning off fog.

Weapon: Light Sword

Hyrule Castle

The adventure comes to a close in Hyrule Castle. Villain Zant is gone. There's only one enemy left to defeat before you've saved the kingdom.

WOLF AND WARRIOR

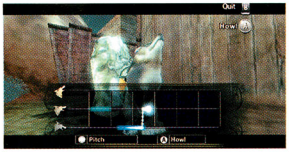
Your apprenticeship as the hero of Hyrule won't be complete until you learn seven hidden skills. They include the brutal Ending Blow finishing move and the challenging-to-pull-off but powerful Back Slice. After you learn the first skill, search for Howling Stones to learn the rest.

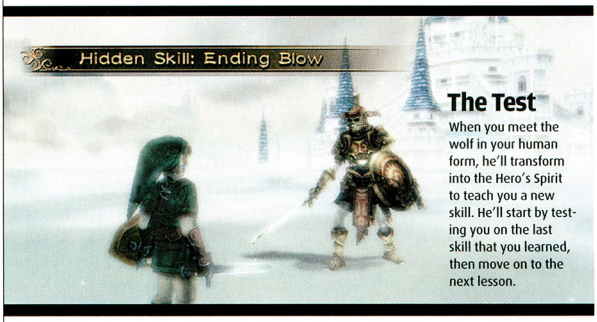
The Meeting

The golden wolf will confront you on your way to the Forest Temple. In meetings that follow, you'll howl with the wolf in your canine form, then track him down again after you've returned to human form. That's when he'll teach you a skill.

Howl for Hidden Skills

The road to learning all but the first hidden skill starts with the discovery of a Howling Stone. Approach the stone in wolf form and learn its song. You'll repeat the tune by manipulating the Control Stick. Once you've howled the song once, you'll get the attention of the golden wolf, then join him in a duet.





The Test

When you meet the wolf in your human form, he'll transform into the Hero's Spirit to teach you a new skill. He'll start by testing you on the last skill that you learned, then move on to the next lesson.

CATCH THE BIG ONE

One of the places where Wii control really shines is in fishing. Your remote plays the part of a fishing pole and, in lure fishing, the nunchuk acts as your reel. Fishing does figure into the adventure a little. But, for the most part, it's just for fun.

Bobber-Fishing

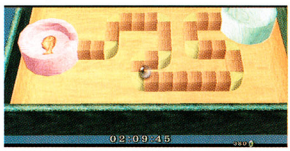
You'll get a fishing pole early in your adventure and use it in Ordon Village to pluck a couple of Greengills from the water. You can also use it in Kakariko Village and all over Zora's Domain.

Map the fishing pole to the B Button, then press B to equip it. Pull back then swing forward with the remote as you would a real fishing pole to cast your line. When the bobber sinks, pull back and hold steady to bring in the catch of the day.

Lure-Fishing

After you've restored the light to Lanayru Province (on your way to Lakebed Temple), you'll be able to fish with lures at Hena's fishing hole, north of Upper Zora's River. You'll grab a Piece of Heart by casting a line at a rock formation, and catch large specimens of most fish varieties by experimenting with different types of lures.

Rollgoal Minigame



Press the C Button to look at the Rollgoal game in Hena's shop, then roll a ball through a maze. Victory in the eighth maze earns you a frog lure.

More to Explore

There is far more to The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess than a single magazine article can explore. For the complete picture, you need the official Nintendo Power player's guide: 196 pages packed with complete maps and exhaustive strategies.

visit www.nintendopower.com/guides/twilight

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REFLECTIONS ON ZELDA

The final in-depth look at the development of The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess.

EIJI AONUMA | NINTENDO | KYOTO

The wait was longer than expected, but the years of anticipation have paid off: The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess has arrived, and the game is Link's most involved, impressive, expansive adventure yet. Just as players around the world are thrilled to experience Twilight Princess in its entirety, the game's designers are exhilarated to see their hard work come to life—none more so than the game's director Eiji Aonuma, who last spoke to us in depth about Twilight Princess in the inaugural installment of Inside Zelda in Volume 192. Nineteen months later, we're concluding our detailed look at Twilight Princess's development by speaking to Aonuma-san once more as he discusses his long, challenging journey through Twilight.

Nintendo Power: Now that The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess is done, how happy are you with the end result?

Eiji Aonuma: Well, I'm still at a point where I have a lot of parts that I regret and a lot of parts that I thought worked really well, and I really feel I need more time to truly comprehend these thoughts. I'm actually still having thoughts like, "I wanted to do this, and I wanted to put that in," so in that sense those are some parts that I regret. But at the same time, I've received many positive reactions from the testers and other people that have helped me throughout this journey, and that has given me a firm conviction that I made something really good. The development process was just very long, so I'm still at a point where it's going to take a long time before I can look back at everything that I've been through. I might be able to get a better grasp of how I feel about the game from my reactions when I actually buy and play it, so it's hard to say how satisfied I am at the moment.

"The total scale of the world, however, has definitely surpassed that of Ocarina of Time. There are a lot more dungeons as well."

NP: How did the tea table get upended this time?

EA: According to Miyamoto-san, this time around the things that were on the tea table

Areas like the vast Gerudo Desert give Twilight Princess a sense of scale beyond that of all previous Zelda adventures.

were just reorganized, and the tea table actually didn't upend. I personally think it's been upended quite a bit! I felt that Miyamoto-san worked on Zelda full force, considering how it's going to be released with the launch of a new console. He normally comes in and gives an impression or two around the time a game is finished, but this time you can say he was glued to the entire development process, giving detailed orders all the time. So I think it's safe to say that Twilight Princess has a lot more Miyamoto influence than other recent Zelda games.

NP: You've said that your goal was to make a game even better than Ocarina of Time. How do you think you've met that goal?
EA: It's really difficult to say if one game has surpassed the other. Maybe I'll know when it sells more copies than Ocarina of Time! The total scale of the world, however, has definitely surpassed that of Ocarina of Time. There are a lot more dungeons as well. And these are not just big dungeons without any content—they're all stuffed to the top with solid gameplay. I must warn you that this game will take a lot longer to complete than Ocarina of Time, so be prepared! But we also made it so people won't just give up because they get stuck. I believe all players will be able to fully enjoy the massive game world.

NP: The game seems to have a more-mature narrative and a heavier emphasis on story. Was this a conscious decision, and what do you think it adds to the game?
EA: We never intentionally made the game story-oriented. Players will see Link embrace his destiny when Hyrule becomes engulfed in twilight, but at first they won't have a clue about what's happening. Since we have to explain to players what is going on, you could say that the exposition did get more extensive. Also, because we wanted the game to look more realistic, the story had to be a little darker to better match the feel of the game. All our design decisions were made because our primary goal was for players to experience a Zelda world where they actually felt like they were inside the game.

"...Twilight Princess has elements in it that were made so that people who played Ocarina can say, 'Oh, I remember this!'"

Having them understand the story was just one part of reaching that goal.

NP: How did you balance appealing to the hard-core Zelda fans and drawing in new fans?
EA: I felt that the Wii controller would provide a great opportunity to attract people who have never played a Zelda game before, so we put in elements that would let Zelda newcomers easily get into the gameplay. For example, the Wii remote's direct-pointing capability was designed so that people using the remote for the first time would be able to use it without getting confused. As an unexpected result, there were actually instances where the control changes made for Wii were adapted to GCN, and they ended up improving the gameplay in the GameCube version!

NP: How is Twilight Princess connected to Ocarina of Time?
EA: Twilight Princess was developed with Ocarina of Time as its starting point, so there are aspects of the story that are based on Ocarina of Time. The main connection is that Twilight Princess is set about a hundred years after Ocarina of Time. Some aspects of gameplay are borrowed from Ocarina of Time, and some objects that were in Hyrule during Ocarina of Time still exist in Twilight Princess. Of course, you can play the

Giving Link a new look was just one of the ways that Aonuma sought to immerse players like never before.

game just fine even if you don't know what the connections are, but Twilight Princess has elements in it that were made so that people who played Ocarina can say, "Oh, I remember this!" Link and Zelda, however, are not the same people that appeared in Ocarina, nor are they directly related to them.

NP: The game was originally supposed to be out a year ago. How did the delay change and benefit the game?

EA: We showcased a playable demo back at E3 2005, and after hearing all the positive feedback, we were certain that we were headed in the right direction. But soon after that, I found out that the relationship between Zelda and Nintendo's new console, Wii, was complicating matters. What I mean is that releasing Twilight Princess for the GameCube and creating a whole new Zelda for Wii immediately after that would have been extremely difficult to do time-wise. Around that time, the idea of making Twilight Princess for Wii came along. To make that idea come to life, we were required to develop the GameCube version and the Wii version in tandem, and we concluded that there was no way to finish both of them within the original schedule. I know I just said I was certain about the direction I was headed at E3 2005, but to be honest I did have my doubts about finishing it in time with all the things we still had to do, so I was actually relieved when we were given more time. And now that I've seen the finished product, I know that was a wise decision.

"I think that keeping Link left-handed is very important for the franchise, but I feel that making the game experience as enjoyable as possible is even more important."

NP: Would you consider Twilight Princess the most challenging Zelda game you've worked on?

EA: Well, making Zelda is always a challenge. Twilight Princess was originally developed solely for the GameCube. You can say that the GameCube, in many ways, is a very complete video game console. Since Zelda, a title that has a strong following of fans, was going to be released on that kind of a console, I thought about making the controls more complicated to appeal to that hard-core audience. But after the decision was reached to make the game for Wii, we made the controls easier to understand. Because of that, the changes that had to be made were very difficult. Just the fact that the Wii remote has fewer buttons than the GameCube controller was in itself a big hurdle to overcome. When we presented it at this year's E3 we were still going through a lot of trial and error, and the controls weren't at a level I felt comfortable with. The final control setup came to fruition after six months of effort and a lot of long, hard work based on the feedback we received from E3. Normally the controls of a game are solidified during the initial development process, but for Zelda, the development of the content and the controls were going on at the same time. In that respect, the development process was very difficult.

NP: Why did you decide to change the controls so that you get to swing the remote to swing Link's sword? Did you face a huge dilemma when you chose to make Link right-handed?

EA: In the version that we presented at this year's E3, you could swing Link's sword with the B Button, but before that we actually experimented with swinging the Wii remote. At that time the result wasn't satisfactory, so we ended up using the B Button instead. But after E3, we received comments that the sword should be controlled by swinging the remote since it would be more intuitive, so we thought of ways to make swinging the remote feel more natural and not forced. After making many tweaks, the control evolved into its current form. During that process, we discovered that the most important part of making the controls feel intuitive was to make Link right-handed instead of the southpaw that he's always been. Throughout the series, Link has always been left-handed, and this was actually a big change to make, but I was convinced that this was the only way to make the control method work. After Miyamoto-san (who is left-handed) used the new control scheme and said that it didn't feel awkward, I decided it was the way to go. I think that keeping Link left-handed is very important for the franchise, but I feel that making the game experience as enjoyable as possible is even more important. I haven't decided whether we'll make Link right-

Aonuma's toughest challenge was adapting the controls for Wii.

The Goron Mines, which feature fiery pits and magnetic surfaces, rank among Aonuma's favorite dungeons in Twilight Princess.

handed or left-handed in future Zelda games.

NP: What other challenges did you face when you decided to bring the game to Wii?
EA: I think the toughest part was figuring out how to convert the GameCube controls to the Wii. For example, the GameCube has the C Stick, which controls the camera and lets players look around in 3-D space. The Wii controller, on the other hand, doesn't have a C Stick. We decided to use the C Button on the Wii's nunchuk to switch to a first-person view, and we realized that the Wii's 16x9 screen ratio resulted in the ability to see the game world from a wider angle, which compensated for the missing camera control and helped players get a better grasp of the 3-D environment. In other words, the difficult part was converting the fun 3-D gameplay on GameCube to something compatible with the Wii controller, while at the same time making the experience more enjoyable. We weren't able to do this by just thinking it through; it was a cyclical process of actually trying things out using the controllers, getting the feel of how it works, and then improving the controls based on user feedback. Although it was hard work, I learned that making a small change can result in a big difference in the way the controls feel, and that was actually a very valuable and interesting experience. I really enjoyed experimenting and discovering things with the new hardware.

Internally, we called the process "Wii Localizing," since we were using the GameCube controls as our foundation. But if we were creating the controls for a Wii Zelda game completely from scratch, the process would present a totally new challenge, and the result could potentially be something thoroughly new. I would really like to try it.

NP: Do you have any particular favorites from the game: a favorite dungeon, a favorite new item, a favorite character, or a favorite boss, for example?
EA: It's hard to say what's the best, but out of the dungeons, it might be the second dungeon—the Goron Mines, which are set among fire and lava. You clear this dungeon by using the newly obtained Hero's Bow, and I like the general flow that leads up to acquiring the bow very much, especially the hints foreshadowing the things to come. It's balanced really well, and compared to traditional dungeons, which usually have a really closed-in feel, this dungeon has an area that opens out to the sky; it's designed really well. You could say this dungeon follows the conventional Zelda dungeon recipe but has a lot of new flavor added to it. The fifth dungeon, Snowpeak Ruins, is also unique—it has many features that may make you ask, "Is this really a dungeon?" There are things in this dungeon that we doubted would work when we had them on paper, but they ended up working really well when we actually made them. It was really so much fun; it was actually an eye-opening experience for me. I was very happy, because in a sense it broke the boundaries of what I thought a dungeon is supposed to be.

"Although it was hard work, I learned that making a small change can result in a big difference in the way the controls feel..."

For the item, it would be the Double Clawshots, which is something I wanted to do from early on in the planning stages. You shoot two Clawshots in a row, which allows you to travel on walls and ceilings like Spider-Man. We made Link look really dynamic when he's doing this. He almost looks like he's flying.

Many characters appear in this Zelda, but my favorite would definitely be Link. Link looks really cool this time around. The staff thoroughly researched how to make Link look his best, and I would say he's the best-looking Link there is. If I was a girl, I think I would fall in love with Link. This is a Legend of Zelda where the player controlling Link can say, "Wow, I look good!"

NP: With the game finally done, what are you going to do next?
EA: Well, first I need to finish Phantom Hourglass for DS. Just yesterday, the director showed me the latest version, and it looked very good—it featured a lot of new ideas. My first task is to finish that game.

Due to a variety of circumstances, my role in Twilight Princess evolved from producer to director. I feel that Twilight Princess should have been created primarily by our younger staff members, but the way I see it, that didn't happen because I was involved with hands-on creation more than supervision. In the future, I hope to offer more guidance to these talented young creators so they can create a Zelda that I would never be able to make.

Armed with Double Clawshots, Link can zip through his environments almost as if he were flying. Aonuma had the tool in mind early in the game's development cycle.

Five-Star Truck Test

We've pushed the limits of Wii launch title **Excite Truck**, crashing, jumping, and busting out stunts so we could give you our top strategies. In the end, it all comes down to collecting tons of stars.

By Scott Pelland

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Tree School

SUPER TREE RUN

Trying to max out your star count with a Super Tree Run is risky business. One wrong move and you'll wrap your ride around a tree trunk. It doesn't help that the thick foliage makes it particularly hard to see the best route ahead. Look for natural breaks and alleys leading straight through woodland areas, like the ones we demonstrate below. If you keep to the straight and narrow, you'll earn five stars or more for your effort.

SCOTLAND – BARON'S RUN Platinum Cup

^ After the first two terrain morphs, look for a white rock cliff on the left. The entrance to the tree run is at the end of the cliff straight ahead. Boost along the water-lined, engine-cooling track and you'll score multiple five-star runs.

< Take the low road into the woods just past the castle. Not only can you score five-star Super Tree Runs here, but the woody path is a shortcut to the finish line. It's also extremely hazardous.

CANADA – WINDING ROAD Platinum Cup

Canada is full of trees and great opportunities to earn stars with Super Tree Runs. On this course, look for the morph switch that creates a series of shallow pools for your first big chance to dive into the woods. After turboing through the pools, you'll swing around a right-hand curve; and that's where you'll find the tree run on the right. The narrow trail veers slightly to the left .

Shortly after the first run-with the lake on your left-look for a narrow passage through the trees directly behind a Power (POW) item. Hit the POW and steer straight to avoid an untimely crash. If you survive the gauntlet run, you'll earn multiple Super Tree Runs for your effort.

As you boost through the air on this big air jump, take note of the narrow track to the right below and steer your truck toward it. Lining up with the trail isn't easy, and you may want to cut your air time so you can collect the POW item at the entrance to the run. You can collect several Super Tree Runs by blasting through this narrow corridor.

TRUCKIN' TACTICS

Startin' Slow

Unlike in most racing games, getting out to a quick lead is a bad idea in Excite Truck. You'll earn 50 stars for finishing first, but to open more tracks you'll have to meet a minimum star count that could be two or three times that amount. Keep the following strategies in mind.

Smash-Tested

Boost off the starting line and smash into the nearest competitor to score a Truck Smash and some easy stars. Staying with the pack for the first lap gives you more and easier star-earning opportunities than racing ahead. Keep an eye on your turbo meter so you don't overheat your engine.

Road to Ruin

Another opportunity that arises when you run with the pack is the chance to earn stars from Truck Throws. Hit a morph switch when trucks are in front of you and they'll be tossed into the air.

Levels of Excitement

You'll begin racing at the Excite difficulty level, but once you win enough races to unlock Super Excite difficulty, the competition gets tougher, and you may have to plan on taking the lead earlier.

Endin' Fast

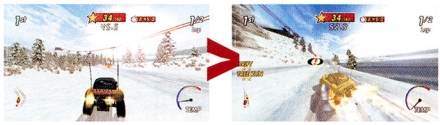
In the end, you'll want to win the first-place 50 star bonus, as well. On the final lap, use shortcuts, "nice landings", turbo boosts and hit POW boost items to put yourself in the lead for good.

High-Fivin'

SUPER AIR SPIN

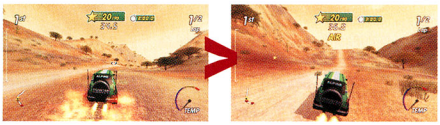
Big air can earn you five-star counts in several ways. First, try to max out the time you spend airborne and the distance you travel to score Super Air. Then, while you're flying high, pull off as many Air Spins as time allows to score even more stars. If you perform several rotations, you'll earn five-star Super Air Spins!

FINLAND – ICEBERG RUN Silver Cup



Finland's Iceberg Run gives you a great opportunity to practice Super Air Spins, not to mention snatching lots of stars. Stay on the left-hand route as you hop across the small icebergs, then collect the POW item to boost your speed in preparation for the jump. The terrain morph switch where the roads converge creates a big ramp, from which you can pull off a Super Air Spin 1080.

MEXICO – GREENHORN GULCH Bronze Cup



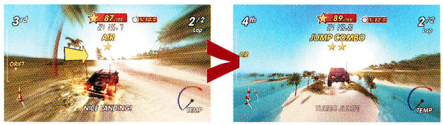
Out in the Mexican desert, you can experience one of the game's best big air opportunities. On the back half of the course, look for a morph switch as you take a right-hand turn into a canyon. A ramp will pop up in front of you. Boost up the ramp, while avoiding overheating your truck, and you'll catch enough air to nail a Super Air Spin 1080.

Bump Trucks

JUMP COMBO

Small bumps can be just as effective as big jumps when it comes to earning stars. Combining turbo boosts and "nice landings" on a series of small hills or jumps will earn you Jump Combos. Keep your eyes peeled for a series of bumps, and always boost off each crest. You'll achieve fast speeds and score lots of stars.

FIJI – BEACH RUN Silver Cup



Fiji's small sandy ramps and relatively open island terrain provide a great setting for scoring Jump Combos. You'll pick up extra stars, as well. Remember to use your turbo boost as soon as you land, and jump off each bump to keep the combo going as long as possible.

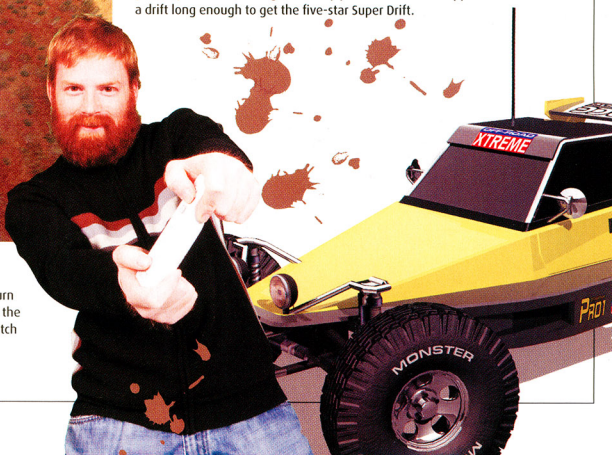
Slide Rules

SUPER DRIFT

Your truck tends to drift around any sharp corner, but if you learn to extend your drifts for long distances you'll gain almost endless opportunities to earn extra stars. The trick to extending a drift into a Super Drift is to stay on the throttle while continuing to point the nose of the truck into the turn.

CHINA – WATER WAY Silver Cup

In the shadow of the Great Wall is the ultimate location for long drifts. Once you drop into the snaking waterway you'll have several opportunities to hold a drift long enough to get the five-star Super Drift.



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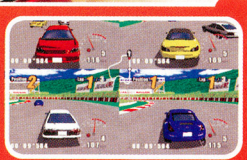

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BIRTH OF A HEDGEHOG

To celebrate Sonic's 15th birthday, we tracked down the original creative staff for an inside look at the genesis of the world's most beloved hedgehog. By Steve Thomason

Taking on the Plumber

From 1985 to 1989, Nintendo dominated the home console market. The Nintendo Entertainment System trounced its main competitor, the Sega Master System, and was owned by a staggering 25 percent of US households. Sega knew that if it was going to have any hope of reversing the company's fortunes, it would have to beat Nintendo to market with a next-generation machine. It released the 16-bit Sega Genesis in the fall of 1989, and by 1990 Sega had indeed started to chip away at Nintendo's mindshare thanks to a steady

stream of popular arcade ports. But with the launch of the Super NES looming the following year, and alongside it a new Super Mario title, Sega president Hayao Nakayama decided that the Genesis needed a mascot of its own to take on the mustachioed plumber (and Master System poster boy Alex Kidd just wasn't going to cut it). He wanted a character that would be to Sega what Mickey Mouse was to Disney.

Answering Nakayama's call were a character designer named Naoto Oshima and a talented young programmer named Yuji Naka, who had previously collaborated on the Phantasy Star series. The two started brainstorming ideas for the project, but it couldn't move forward in earnest until they found a game designer. That's when world events unexpectedly teamed them with Hirokazu Yasuhara. "At the time, I was supposed to go to the United States to establish a new R&D team [at Sega of America] with Mark Cerny," recalls Yasuhara. "But then the [first] Gulf War started, and my move to the US was postponed for three months. Work was progressing on the [new mascot] game, but Naka and Oshima needed a full-time game designer on the project. They saw that I was free, and looked to me for help designing the game until my departure. So I officially joined the project as a game designer, planning to work on it only until I went to the US. But I ended up staying in Japan for a year until we finished the project." And thus was formed what would eventually become known as "Sonic Team."

The Need for Speed

The team realized that for Sega's new mascot to reach the same level as Mario, the game had to offer players something fresh and exciting. As Yasuhara puts it, "Almost all the game companies at that time were trying to make Mario-like action games. Mario is great, but people wished to see something new." The developers needed to come up with a strong game concept first, then design the character around it. Yuji Naka suggested speed as the main focus. "When I first started working on the project, I remember looking at the various games that were out at the time and wishing that they were cooler and that the characters moved faster," says Naka. So the programmer almost single-handedly created a game engine that took full advantage of the Genesis hardware's speedy CPU (a blazing 7.6 MHz). "Naka gave me a demonstration of the game engine that showed a new method of scrolling the background at a very fast speed," recalls Yasuhara. "I then began thinking about how we could create a game using this technology."

But executing the concept proved difficult. According to Yasuhara, "The biggest challenge was fighting with the matter of how to make the best use of a 'speedy' character in gameplay." One idea was to have a rabbit that could pick up objects with its ears and throw them at enemies. But the team decided that particular mechanic slowed down the game too much and was too complex. "The concept of speed can be difficult for some gamers," says Naka, "and I didn't want it to be a game only for the really good players."

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

The Original Sonic Team

Yuji Naka, Programmer

After the success of Sonic, Naka became one of the biggest names in game development. As the eventual head of Sonic Team, he served as producer on a number of Sega classics. He recently left the company to start his own independent studio named Prope.

Naoto Oshima, Character Designer

Though he continued to work as a character designer, Oshima also began directing such titles as Sonic CD, NiGHTS, and Burning Rangers. In 1999 he established Artoon, which recently teamed with Nintendo on Yoshi's Island DS.

Hirokazu Yasuhara, Game Planner

Yasuhara remained as the lead game designer for Sonic 2, Sonic 3, and Sonic & Knuckles. He now works at Naughty Dog, where he has contributed to the Jak and Daxter series.

Masato Nakamura, Composer

Nakamura continues to rock Japan as the bassist for Dreams Come True. He recently collaborated with rapper Akon on a remix of "Sweet, Sweet, Sweet," the end theme from Sonic 2.

Reiko Kodama, Designer

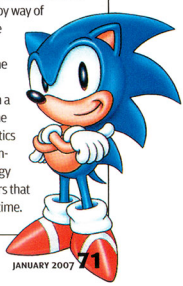
Kodama stayed with the hedgehog through Sonic 2 before returning to the Phantasy Star series. She was also the producer on Skies of Arcadia. Though she remains at Sega, her current project is unknown.

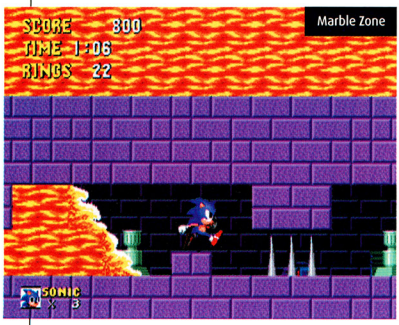
Sonic the Armadillo?

A breakthrough occurred when Naka proposed that the character be able to attack enemies without needing to stop. One way to do that, he offered, was to give it the ability to curl into a ball. That way, Naka argued, the player could move fast through the entire level *and* defeat enemies in a whole new way. Oshima designed two characters around the idea: an armadillo and a hedgehog. Because it's covered in spines and therefore looks more dangerous, the team ultimately decided to go with the hedgehog. They made him blue to match the color of Sega's logo.

> **"I remember looking at the various games that were out at the time and wishing that they were cooler."** —Yuji Naka

In addition to his speed, the developers wanted the hedgehog to stand out by way of his personality. "[Ours] was the first action-game character to display an 'attitude' towards the player," notes Yasuhara. "It meant that [he] was more than a mere cursor for the player." The hedgehog's finger-wagging antics may seem tame by today's standards, but they were pretty edgy compared to the lifeless avatars that populated most games at the time.





All that was left was to give the character a moniker that reflected his unique traits. "After long consideration," recalls Yasuhara, "almost at the end of the project, the name of the hedgehog was decided: Sonic."

Genesis Does

Since Sonic would be going up against Nintendo's newest hardware, it was crucial for his game to look and sound as good as possible. Naka's engine pushed the Genesis further than any previous game, and the team started experimenting with an emerging visual technique that hadn't been seen in home-console games before. "It was not common to use 3-D computer graphics at the time," says Naka, "but that [visual style] influenced us a lot. If you take a look at the palm trees that appear at the very beginning, for instance, you can see that they are depicted in an early 3-D polygonal style." To help with the graphic design for the stages, the team brought in Reiko Kodama, who had worked with Naka and Oshima on the Phantasy Star series. "It was still hard to display polygons back then, but the graphics in Sonic the Hedgehog were designed incorporating polygonal styles," explains Kodama. "[When designing levels], I drew the whole field using CG-like images. We intentionally created the designs as if they were illustrated artificially with CG tools. To tell you the truth, we drew them bit-by-bit because the software for computer graphics had not been developed much at the time. [Laughs]" As a result, the game's visuals boasted an incredible sense of depth. Combine that with Sonic's unparalleled speed, and Sega's new mascot had more than enough graphical punch to stand toe-to-toe with Super Mario World.

"Ours was the first action-game character to display an 'attitude' towards the player."
—Hirokazu Yasuhara

The team was determined to attain that same cutting-edge quality for the game's music. "Instead of the ordinary FM-synthesized video game music [prevalent] at the time, we wanted to use radio-quality music to show off the performance of the new 16-bit hardware," says Yasuhara. So they looked to an up-and-coming Japanese pop star to compose the soundtrack. "When we first started the project, we didn't plan on using a famous composer from outside of Sega," comments Naka. "However, my boss introduced me to Mr. Masato Nakamura, who was a member of [the popular Japanese band] Dreams Come True. It was his first time working on a game, but I remember the entire staff being impressed by his sample music the first time we heard it." For Nakamura, the project's allure stemmed from the passion he saw in the development team. "The thing that really made me want to do the music for Sonic was that everyone at Sega was so intent on the whole, 'This is going to beat out Mario!' feeling," recalls the muscian. "I figured that, sure, I'd do whatever I could to help with that goal."

Nakamura created the game's tunes, ironically, on an Atari computer. "At the time, the key point was the number of sounds that could play simultaneously, and so it was really hard deciding what sounds you could get out of it at once since that number was so limited. And unfortunately, with what I had to work with, I had a limit of only four sounds that could play at the same time." But despite those limitations, Nakamura created one of the most dynamic and memorable soundtracks in video game history. "I wanted melodies that the player would hum along with as they were playing, dramatic music for when the scenes were intense, climactic music for when bosses would show up, and then tie it all together with an uplifting theme for the end credits. I also wanted to make sure that the music didn't lose its groove. After all, one of Sonic's key elements lies in speed."

Sonic Boon

The rest, as they say, is history. Sonic the Hedgehog was released on June 23, 1991, and led to Sega's success during the 16-bit era. Nakayama didn't just get his Mickey Mouse; he got something bigger. By 1992, Sonic was, amazingly, more recognizable among kids 6-11 than Mickey himself. Over the past 15 years, the series has gone on to sell more than 44 million units worldwide. And the hedgehog shows no signs of slowing down. His original classic will be available on both the Game Boy Advance and Wii's Virtual Console this fall, and next year he'll star in an all-new Wii adventure.

Though many of the original Sonic Team members have moved on, they all look back fondly on the project that changed not only their careers, but the entire video game industry. "I discovered many things about gaming from that project, and I'm still standing on those experiences today," reflects Yasuhara. "It is a game that I always look back on whenever I choose a way to design a new game. Sonic is always with me."

SONIC MAKEOVERS

Evolution of a Hedgehog

1991

You can see a bit of Mickey Mouse influence in Oshima's original design. The character was rounder and more compact than his later incarnations, and sported a more youthful appearance.

1999

For Sonic Adventure on Dreamcast, Sonic underwent a dramatic redesign at the hands of Yuji Uekawa. The anime-style makeover resulted in a character with longer legs, green eyes, and spines that looked almost like hair.

2006

Subsequent changes have not been nearly as drastic, but the character is more-frequently rendered in 3-D nowadays. Sonic has become increasingly stylized, and looks much less like an actual hedgehog than he did 15 years ago.

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TEEN T Violence
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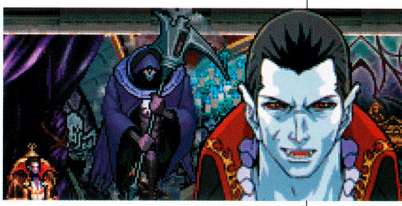
NINTENDO DS. PlayStation Portable LUCASARTS UBISOFT

The Path of Ruin

Evil is branching out in Castlevania: Portrait of Ruin, spreading from Dracula's castle to Brauner's nightmarish paintings. No one ever said the path of ruin would be easy.

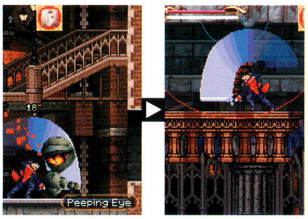
By Casey Loe

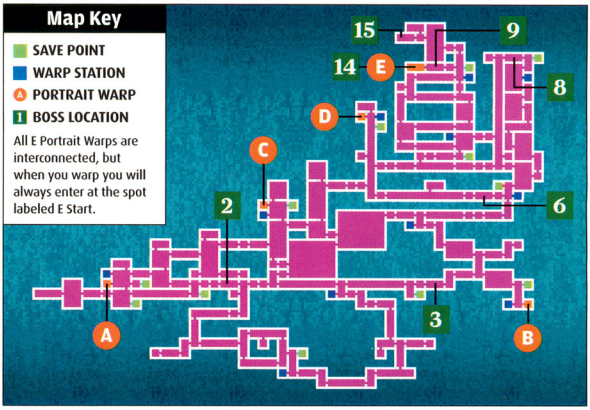
You'll find Portrait of Ruin's greatest challenges in the boss chambers scattered throughout Dracula's castle and Brauner's paintings. The following pages present specific strategies for each boss, but don't read ahead if you want to preserve the surprises—Jonathan and Charlotte's quest is full of unexpected turns.



Peeping Eyes See All

Instead of trying to smash every wall that looks suspicious, find hidden rooms easily by equipping the Eye for Decay, a helmet that will reveal any breakable wall when equipped. To get one, have your luckiest character kill Peeping Eyes repeatedly on the City of Haze train station steps. Leave the room and return to make the Peeping Eyes respawn continuously.





The Path to Survival

The key to progressing through Dracula's castle is to earn new abilities from relics, spells, and skills. These will allow you to gain new moves, morph into more-mobile creatures, or simply add a deadly new weapon to your arsenal. You'll usually find a vital spell or relic after each boss, so don't leave a painting until you've searched the areas beyond the boss chamber thoroughly.

Relics give your team access to new moves and abilities, such as double jumps, slides, and special attacks. Make sure they're turned on in the Relics menu!

Dual Crush co-op attacks are among your most powerful anti-boss weapons. They consume a lot of MP but deal heavy damage, and some can even preempt enemy attacks.

Not all of Charlotte's spells are offensive. Some can be used to boost stats, clear status conditions, or even morph a character into a toad or an owl to reach items in tight spots.

A Whisper in the Wind

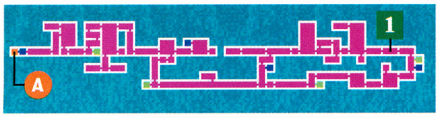
A mysterious ghost named Wind hangs out outside of the item shop, where he'll present you with items and skills in exchange for your completion of simple quests. Many quests involve collecting a series of items, so never, ever sell any item you find in the castle or in a painting (but feel free to sell items dropped by enemies or purchased at the shop).

Wind will offer quests periodically, but you can accept only five at once. After you complete a certain number of quests, Wind will offer one called the Nest of Evil, which leads to an otherwise-inaccessible area of the castle and a new portrait warp!

Each painting and most castle regions host a boss. You must slay them all to proceed.

1 DULLAHAN

Dullahan can use his best attacks only when his head rejoins his body, so your goal is to ensure that never happens. While your computer-controlled partner strikes at the body for damage, have your other character focus on knocking the floating head away,



2 BEHEMOTH

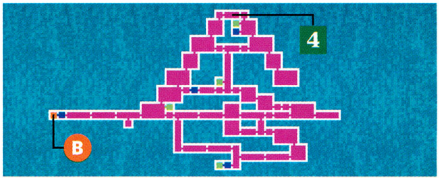
Have Jonathan strike at Behemoth with a weapon that swings in an arc (like the mace) which will ensure you get multiple hits with each swing. Target Behemoth's head with melee weapons and the occasional throwing axe, but save most of your MP for the Holy Lightning Dual Crush.

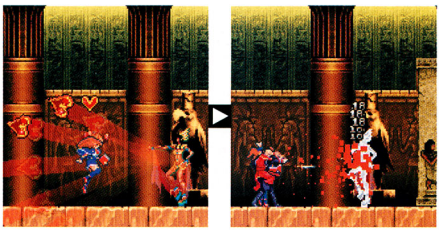
3 KEREMET

Push the pot to the ledges at the right side of the room, then order one hero to stay to the left of the pot while the other ascends the ledges to the right of the pot. The character on the ground will strike at the pot, luring out Keremet so the other hero can safely strike the back of its head.

4 ASTARTE

Astarte's devastating "temptation" move will possess Jonathan and turn him against Charlotte. The best defense is to fight solo with Charlotte; with the Clear Skies spell to protect her and the 1,000 Blades Dual Crush to deal heavy damage, she'll show Astarte who the true femme fatale is.





The Boss Talks

Not only is Koji "Iga" Igarashi the producer of Portrait of Ruin—he's the man responsible for redefining the Castlevania franchise in the late '90s. With the development of Portrait of Ruin complete, Iga took time out of his vampire-hunting schedule to discuss his latest creation and the series' 20-year legacy.

Nintendo Power: It was only about half a year ago when we first saw Portrait of Ruin in early form, and now the game is finished. How difficult was it completing the game in such a short time?

Iga: The development cycle was almost the same as for Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow, but this time we had some trouble with Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection since it was our first online-enabled game. Network adjustments took up the bulk of our bug-testing efforts right before we made the game final. It certainly was a very tight schedule, but fortunately we were able to get the game out on time.

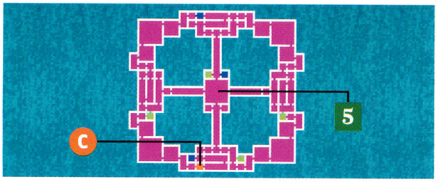
NP: Regardless of which character we controlled, we were constantly impressed at how much the other character contributed. Was it difficult programming the AI to control the backup character so effectively?

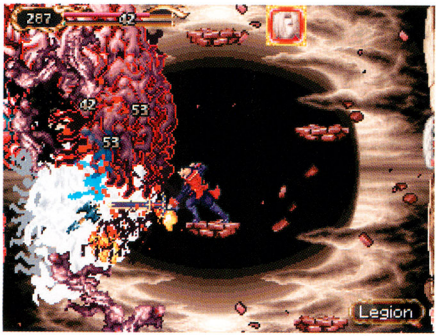
Iga: I'm glad you liked the system we implemented. The hardest element for us to incorporate was making the other character dodge enemy attacks. In the end, we were able to come up with a solution to this situation, but they are not still 100 percent able to dodge ranged attacks.

NP: How much impact did the ties to Castlevania: Bloodlines have on the final game?

5 LEGION

You'll need to slash through a shell of bodies to reach Legion's gooey center—have Jonathan attack from the ledge while Charlotte casts Rock Riot repeatedly from beneath it. When the center is exposed, attack with Rock Riots and axes from between Legion's lasers.

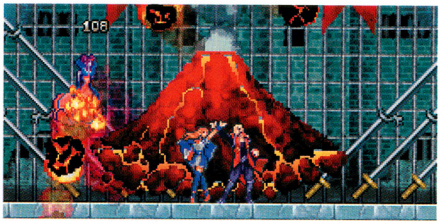




When the ledge beside Legion is safely between two lasers, jump on it and nail Legion's core with the 1,000 Blades Dual Crush.

6 STELLA

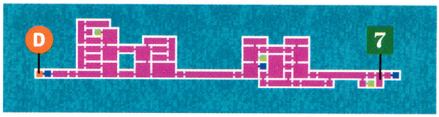
Double-team Stella and pick away at her 2,500 HP with midair strikes and subweapons like the Bible, or go solo with Charlotte and focus on dodging her attacks and retaliating with fully charged Gale Force spells. Use your new double jump to leap over her ground-skimming energy waves.

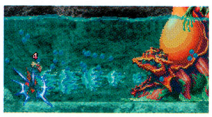


When you can't dodge an incoming attack, use the Volcano Dual Crush to protect your team. Save it for when Stella is nearby and toward the bottom of the screen so she'll take the most damage.

7 DAGON

Dagon's only weak spot is the head on its tail, so you'll want to use a long weapon like a spear to reach it. Axes work nicely as subweapons, but save some MP for Charlotte's Dark Rift spell, which will protect you from Dagon's water beam by sucking it into another dimension!





If you can't afford to buy the Dark Rift spell, you can send Charlotte away and have Jonathan use the Stonewall skill to reduce the damage you suffer. You can also avoid the beam by jumping along the water's surface.

Iga: The major theme for Portrait of Ruin is "family," specifically the ongoing feud between Jonathan and his father Johnny, the hero from Bloodlines. There are a lot of references to Bloodlines in Portrait of Ruin that go beyond basic references (like the use of the Vampire Hunter whip), but I don't want to spoil them for the gamers!

NP: When we talked a few months ago, you told us about the new skills you could earn, and how they were taking the place of enemy souls in recent games. Did the skill system turn out like you envisioned, and do you feel it's better than the soul system?
Iga: The Tactical Soul system let players get one skill from each enemy, but our new system allows them to obtain a number of skills from an opponent. Since Dawn of Sorrow was so focused on souls, we sort of forgot about the kind of items that [enemies] drop. Now that we have regained our focus on this aspect of the game, I think the item drops are even more interesting than what we had in Symphony of the Night. I liked the Tactical Soul system, but found that it got boring after extended play. Our new system is better for the Castlevania fans, in that they can play the game over and over and still enjoy finding new items and skills from all kinds of enemies.

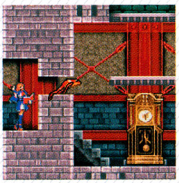
NP: How did you decide upon the types of new environments that players would be able to explore via the paintings?
Iga: Early in development, we had a brainstorm session to come up with ideas for interesting new environments. We were really interested in doing a rendition of Dracula's castle that was set in the desert, but we realized that this would be repetitive for the player. Then we came up with the idea of letting the player warp to different areas outside the castle. Since the main enemy, Brauner, is an artist, we decided to make the warp points paintings. It was a great compromise—we were able to keep Dracula's castle and still show some new areas for the first time in many games.

NP: Was it difficult capturing the Castlevania feel in more-natural and brightly lit environments?
Iga: Our goal was to keep the main castle very Gothic, but vary the look of the outside areas. Yes, it is difficult to maintain a Gothic feel when the environment is outdoors, but our main reason for doing this was to keep the variety very high.

NP: How did the collaboration with composer Yuzo Koshiro come about? What was it like working with him?
Iga: Someone at Konami is friends

Form of a Toad

The Toad Morph spell you earned for beating Dagon will allow you to squeeze through tight passages. Before you use it to reach Death, you may want to return to the Sandy Grave area and use it to reach the Sanctuary spell hidden in the room with the rolling boulders. Casting this spell is the only way to avoid the bad ending when battling Stella & Loretta.



8 DEATH

You'll need to use both characters to slay Death, but you should alternate between them instead of using both at once. Begin with Charlotte, and attack with spells like Ice Needle and Spirit of Light that can be cast from outside of Death's web of chains. When Death turns from purple to grey, switch to Jonathan—the grey form is resistant to magic but much weaker to physical attacks. Jonathan should wait for safe openings to strike with a weapon, and use subweapons like the Axe and Bible when it's too dangerous to get close.

Death has two moves that can send a character from full health to the brink of death within seconds. If you're caught in the path of its spinning scythe attack, use a Dual Crush or the Stonewall skill to avoid taking continuous damage. If he grabs you with one of the hands at the end of the chains, summon your partner and have them cut you free before Death can swing his scythe.

9 STELLA & LORETTA

To see the game's bad ending, you'll need to slay both Stella & Loretta. To beat them as a team, stay close (where they have trouble hitting you) and take great care to avoid Loretta's ice sword. For a safer win, battle with Charlotte alone, use the Dark Rift spell, and slide back and forth beneath the rift to block their attacks while sapping Loretta's health.

Whip's Memory

To continue your quest, you must beat Stella & Loretta with the Sanctuary spell. Have Charlotte begin casting, then switch to Jonathan so he can cover her while she casts (it's a very long spell). Attack the sisters from the opposite side so their spells will be aimed away from Charlotte, but lure them back her way when the spell is nearly finished.

If spared, the sisters will offer to bond Jonathan to the Vampire Killer. Doing so involves battling the whip's memory of Richter Belmont, a difficult fight you can attempt at any point in the game. Attack by using the Nebula whip in mid-air, which allows Jonathan to strike from outside Richter's range. When you run out of space, double-jump over Richter and throw an Axe in mid-air. Bring plenty of Potions and Tonics—Richter has a stunning 5,000 HP!

with Koshiro-san, and they introduced me to him. I had always wanted to work with him on a game, but it just didn't work out. One time I was speaking with [Castlevania series composer] Michiru Yamane, and she suggested we look to Koshiro-san for some fresh musical inspiration on Portrait of Ruin since it has so many new elements, which I thought was a great idea. He had such an amazing grasp of the series, we hardly had to give him any direction at all. I'd love to have him contribute to future Castlevania games if he is interested.

NP: Are you happy with how the game's Wi-Fi component turned out? Do you think you'd want to try a fully cooperative Castlevania adventure in the future?

Iga: As I mentioned earlier, we had some difficulty with the Wi-Fi feature, but I think the final result is a very good first effort. We looked into the co-op mode because one of our goals is to have an entire game that can be played cooperatively. In that sense, we have only just started our research into online play, and there is a lot to look forward to.

NP: Can you give us a hint of what unlockables we'll find at the end of Portrait of Ruin?

Iga: I don't want to give away everything, but there are some details I can share. One of the bonus modes lets you play through the main game as a variety of different characters. Some of these characters are pretty different—for example, one of them attacks using the stylus. You will also unlock a more difficult mode for the main game. It's extreme—I was able to finish it but the battles were out of this world! Anyone on the development team that finished this mode literally received a standing ovation—that's how challenging it is.

NP: What aspects of Portrait of Ruin are you most proud of?

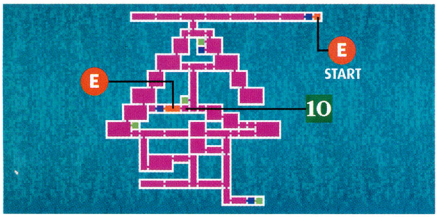
Iga: I'm most proud of the fact that the game is complete and we met the goals we had initially set for ourselves. We are really proud of it, so I hope a lot of DS fans will try it out. It feels like only hard-core gamers like Castlevania at the moment, so I'd like to have more people play it since we are so satisfied with the game.

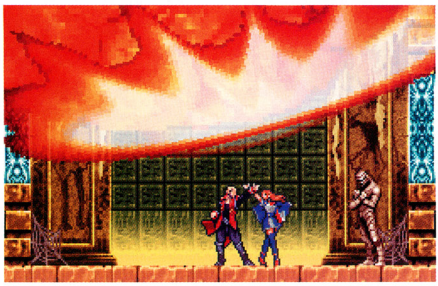
NP: What do you think is the magic ingredient that has kept Castlevania fresh for 20 years?

Iga: Yes, it is astonishing that the series has continued for so long and been so successful. One reason for its longevity is that people are really fascinated by vampires in all forms of media. When people think of vampires and

10 MUMMY MAN

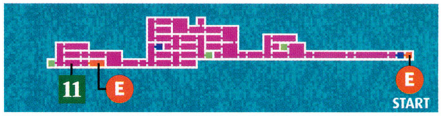
It takes a nimble hand to dodge Mummy Man's attacks while leaping over the boss chamber's moving blocks. AI-controlled characters lack the necessary grace, so keep Charlotte on the bench. Exploit Mummy Man's weaknesses by using Jonathan's Flame Whip, and have Charlotte cast Raging Fire with the R Button. Keep some MP open so you can use Meteor to escape from tight spots.





11 THE CREATURE

Use Charlotte's Dark Rift spell to suck all of The Creature's projectile attacks into another dimension, giving your team the advantage of having to dodge only its physical attacks. Equip Jonathan with a heavy weapon with a wide arc that can hit The Creature twice per swing.



12 WEREWOLF

There aren't many fancy tricks you can use against the Werewolf, so focus on double-teaming him and beating him as quickly as possible. Use your most-damaging subweapon so you can attack from a safe distance, and keep the Meteor Dual Crush handy for when you're cornered.

Exploit the Werewolf's vulnerability to holy attacks by using Piercing Beam as Charlotte's main attack spell. It deals heavy damage and hits multiple times when fully charged.

video games, they usually think of Castlevania. Another reason is that our core development-team members are huge fans of the series, and want to keep playing new games with fresh new ideas, characters, and mechanics. My personal policy toward Castlevania is "keep the tradition alive, but don't be bound by it," and that is how the series survives.

NP: What's the defining moment in the Castlevania series for you personally—something that really stands out and captures what Castlevania is all about?
Iga: The moment when you devise a strategy and defeat a difficult boss that cannot be overcome by brute force—that's "the Castlevania"!

NP: For gamers out there who might not have ever played a Castlevania game, which one should they start with?
Iga: I think Symphony of the Night would be best for casual gamers. The original Castlevania is a good choice for the hard-core gamers who like to be tormented by their games. If you fall somewhere in the middle, Portrait of Ruin would be best.

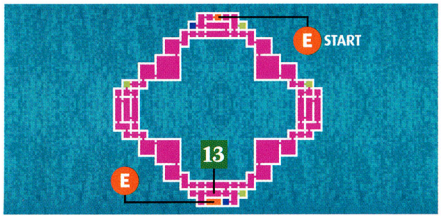
NP: Are there any classic Castlevanias that you feel may have been overlooked by fans?
Iga: Our fans are pretty passionate, so I don't think there are any games they will have overlooked! Perhaps Rondo of Blood fits this category as it was only released in Japan. It's a great game—I enjoy that the stages are more deep than long.

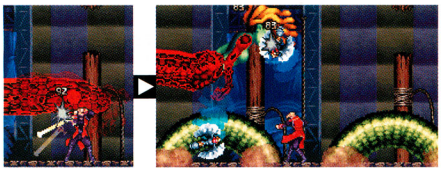
NP: We know you've been asked this numerous times, but have you given any more consideration to what Castlevania on Wii would be like?
Iga: I am still thinking of all the possibilities, but right now I am thinking about all the systems the next game could be on. For me, the Wii controller doesn't yet connect with the core gameplay of Castlevania. I definitely don't want to make a game with gimmicky controls where you swing the controller like a whip, so I'll have to think about it longer.

NP: It was recently announced that in addition to the live-action Castlevania movie, an animated Castlevania movie is in production. Have you been consulted about either project? Can you tell us anything about them?
Iga: These sorts of expansions for the franchise make me happy since it adds to the series and brings it to new audiences. I don't have a lot of details on these projects right now, but I'm sure there will be more information on them soon. Let's find out together!

13 MEDUSA

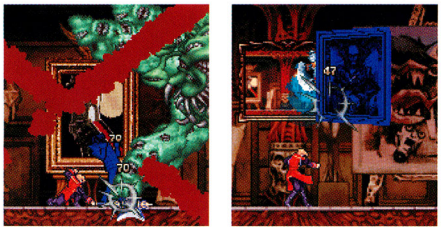
Fight this one solo with Jonathan, swinging at Medusa with the Great Axe (its arc will allow you to hit it from the ground) until the coils appear along the floor. Position yourself safely between two loops near Medusa's head, and throw axes, which will strike it up to three times a piece.





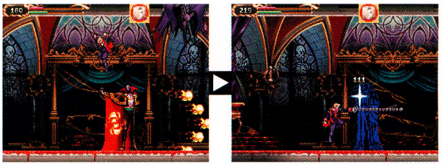
14 BRAUNER

Watch Brauner's hands when he paints—they'll reveal the shape of the scribbles he'll paint across the screen, allowing you to find a safe spot. Jonathan should use his axe to attack Brauner while the boss is in a painting, and Charlotte should use the Tempest spell to make a wall of wind that will both damage Brauner and protect you from many of his attacks.

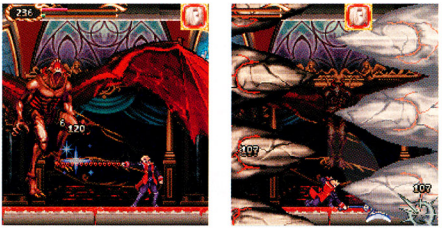


15 DEATH & DRACULA

Death & Dracula attack as a tag team, but you should fight solo with only Jonathan. You can hit Death quite easily with midair attacks, but targeting Dracula is a challenge. Wait for him to materialize while facing you, then double-jump over him so you can strike safely with jump attacks from behind. Be ready to slide or backstep out of the way when Death glides overhead.



When Death & Dracula are in vertical alignment, they'll use powerful Dual Crush attacks. Shortly before those attacks connect, use your own Dual Crush Meteor to deal heavy damage and negate their move!



In the final battle with True Dracula, continue to use Jonathan solo but make heavy use of Charlotte's Piercing Beam spell by pressing the R Button. When True Dracula sits on his throne and attacks with giant claws, you'll need to knock them away to survive. Use a Bible for continuous damage and switch to a Great Axe-like weapon that can hit both sides in a single swing.

Game Over . . . Not Just Yet!

The game isn't over yet—save your game after slaying True Dracula to unlock a treasure trove of bonuses. You'll unlock two new Boss Rush and co-op levels, as well as the ability to play them with several new characters. If you choose to start a new game in a different data slot, you'll be able to select two new pairs of heroes: Richter and Maria (from Rondo of Blood) and sisters Stella and Loretta. You can also start a new game using your just-completed save data, and choose Hard mode (with a selectable max level). You'll begin back at level 1, but with all of your gold and most of the equipment, spells, and skills in your saved game's inventory.

Select your old data and highlight the corresponding number to return to your last save before the ending. If you highlight the bat to the right, you can start a new game with your old equipment and a different difficulty level. To choose different characters, select an open save slot.

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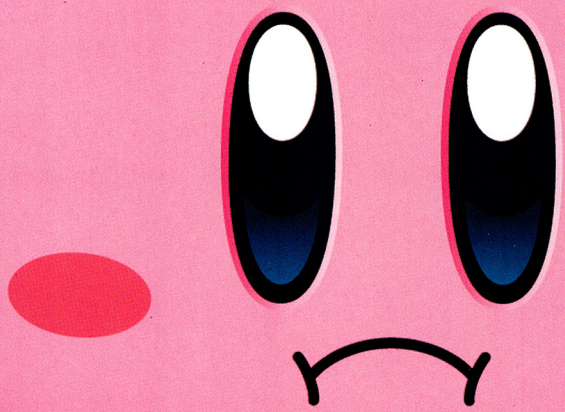
A Full Belly

Kirby's back and is more ravenous than ever in Kirby: Squeak Squad for DS.

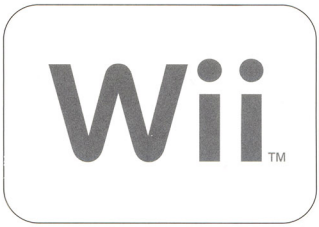
By Andy Myers



1. You Are What You Eat
Imitate your enemies or store their attributes within Kirby's belly for later.

2. Play with Your Food
Mix and match items in Kirby's tummy to create something new.

3. Survival of the Fattest
Find various treasures throughout Kirby's world, and stockpile them in a safe place.



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When it comes to gorging, Kirby is beyond compare. The pink puffball has made a name for himself with his ability to inhale almost anything, from coconuts to parasols to enemies. But did you ever wonder where all those tasty treats go? Kirby: Squeak Squad provides an answer. The platforming adventure offers a peek inside Kirby's belly via the DS touch screen, where you can suck in and store up to five items using the hero's classic inhaling technique. So when Kirby's afternoon slice of cake is whisked away by a gang of rowdy mice, you must take control of the pink protagonist—along with the contents in his tummy—and embark on a quest to get his snack back. On the following pages, we explore how Kirby makes the most of his voracious appetite.

1. You Are What You Eat

The most powerful tool in Kirby's arsenal is his ability to copy an enemies' attributes. In previous games in the franchise, this was achieved by literally inhaling foes. The same method works in Squeak Squad, but now Kirby has a new trick up his sleeve: when you come across a bubble that has an icon of copy ability within it, Kirby can consume the ability and store it in his belly for later. You'll find 23 wildly different copy abilities throughout the game—fans will recognize many of them from previous Kirby adventures, but there are a number of new ones, including Metal Kirby, Animal Kirby, and Bubble Kirby. And each ability comes with its own set of moves that will drastically alter the hero's demeanor—he'll act like Bruce Lee one moment (as Ninja Kirby), and the Tasmanian Devil the next (as Tornado Kirby). If you inhale a fire enemy, for instance, Kirby will immediately become Fire Kirby and learn the moves that go along with it (such as breathing fire). Once an enemy has been inhaled, its ability will remain active until Kirby is attacked or until you voluntarily release it and return Kirby to his normal state. Once you get the hang of changing abilities throughout Kirby's adventure, no obstacle will prevent you from reclaiming Kirby's cake.

2. Play with Your Food

Abilities aren't the only thing Kirby can ingest and store in his belly. You'll also find a number of power-up items such as Maxim Tomatoes and 1-Ups. But since Kirby's belly can hold only five items, you'll run out of space fast—which brings us to the game's most unique feature: item mixing. On the touch screen, not only can you see the contents in Kirby's belly; you can also interact with them. Using the stylus (or your finger), you can move items around and even combine them by dragging one over another. For example, If you combine two Maxim Tomatoes, you'll get a much more powerful healing potion while also freeing up space in Kirby's paunch.

The item-mixing feature really comes to life when you begin mixing copy abilities. Most attribute combinations yield a random outcome, and will sometimes produce abilities that are not available any other way. Mixing abilities can have a variety of results, so you'll need to experiment with different combinations to find out what is possible. (See the sidebar for a quick lesson in mixing abilities.) If space is still tight after you've tinkered with mixing, simply drag an item to the top of the screen to make Kirby hack it up.

The Kirby icons are useless on their own, but mixing three in Kirby's belly will form a 1-UP!

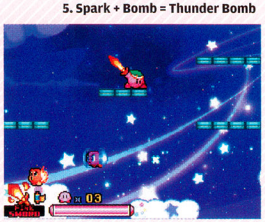
You can often deal with bosses in a variety of ways—experiment!

Split Personalities

Five of the game's all-new abilities are available only by mixing the correct two items in Kirby's belly. The recipes are listed to the right.

1. Fire + Sword = Fire Sword
2. Ice + Sword = Ice Sword
3. Spark + Sword = Thunder Sword
4. Ice + Bomb = Ice Bomb
5. Spark + Bomb = Thunder Bomb

Combine the Fire ability and the Sword ability using your stylus to create something new: the Fire Sword ability.



The Fire Sword ability gives Kirby the same moves as the Sword ability, but infuses them with the power of fire.

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3. Survival of the Fattest

The touch screen holds the game's most unexpected features, but you'll find a quintessential side-scrolling adventure on the top screen. Kirby's quest will take him through eight platform-intensive worlds—from the skies of Cushy Cloud to the waters of the Secret Sea—each chock-full of puzzles, enemies, and bosses. To survive these obstacles, you'll need to uncover the game's many secrets which are often hidden by environmental hazards that you can dispose of by using an ability. Fire Kirby, for instance, can melt ice, and Sword Kirby can cut down pesky shrubbery. Interacting with the environment will sometimes uncover passages that lead to an additional type of edible item: treasure chests. Like other items, treasure chests can be stored (providing there's room in Kirby's belly), but you must complete the level before you can open a chest. Opening chests will reveal items such as permanent power-ups, new moves, tracks for the music player, secret stages, various backgrounds for the touch screen, and new colors for Kirby. You'll need to search each level thoroughly to collect every treasure chest.

Understanding the items in Kirby's belly is only the beginning. Kirby: Squeak Squad is a massive endeavor—it's the game that Kirby fans have long been waiting for. And like every offering from developer HAL Laboratory (creator of Super Smash Bros. Melee and Kirby Air Ride), Squeak Squad is highly replayable. It's also shaping up to be one of the best DS platformers of 2006. Expect Squeak Squad to make some noise in early December.

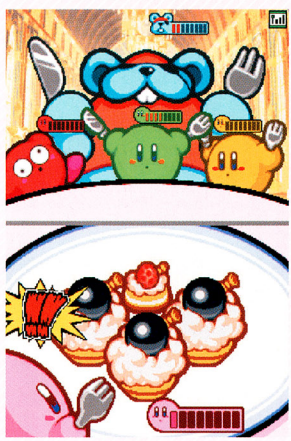
Found items in Kirby's world range from power-up elixirs to Warpstars.

Animal Kirby can dig through dirt to reach secret items.

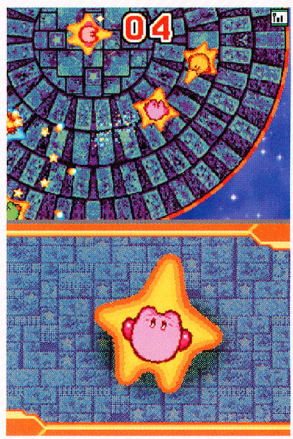
Tired of pink? Collecting secret items will allow you to change Kirby's color at will.

Kirby vs. Kirby

Among Squeak Squad's multitude of supplemental features, you'll find four subgames. Three of these—Speedy Teatime, Smash Ride, and Treasure Shot—are available from the beginning, and the fourth can be unlocked later in the game. Unlike Story mode, the subgames are built around fast-paced stylus control, and each uses the touch screen in a unique way. Smash Ride, for instance, has players riding on Smash Stars while trying to knock the others off a platform with quick swipes of the stylus, while Speedy Teatime is all about touching as many pieces of cake as possible in a short amount of time. The subgames can be played in single-player mode against members of the Squeak Squad, or in multiplayer mode with up to three other players. And all three subgames support DS download play—meaning you need only one copy of the game to compete against friends.



Don't eat the bombs in Speedy Teatime, or you'll really get a major bellyache.



In Smash Ride, you can charge up your Smash Star for a super attack—but you'll be more vulnerable while doing so.

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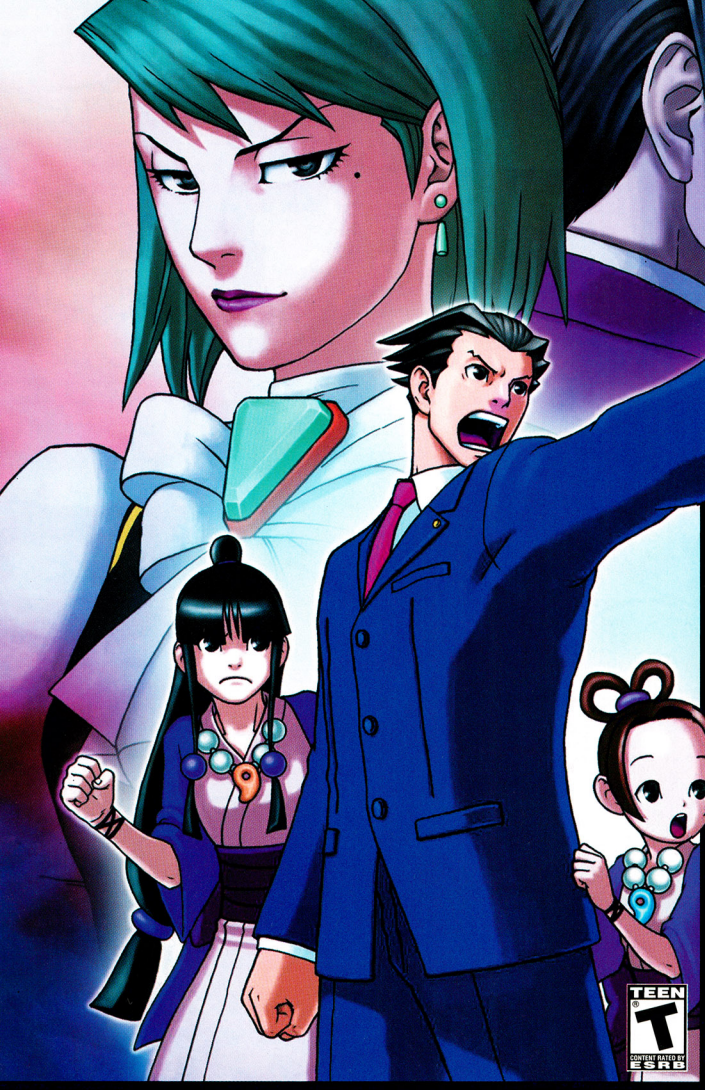

Court of Appeal

Recess is over! Step back into the DS courtroom for a behind-the-scenes look at Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Justice for All.

By Chris Hoffman

When the original Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney hit North America in October 2005, it proved that the most exciting courtroom dramas weren't found in Hollywood motion pictures or on Court TV—they were on Nintendo DS. Thanks to fledgling attorney Phoenix Wright's deductive skills (and a little supernatural help from his deceased mentor), players were able to prove their clients innocent, reveal the guilty, and bring down numerous corrupt public officials in a frequently hilarious graphic-text adventure. In early 2007, it's going to happen all over again when Capcom releases the sequel, Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Justice for All, which features four new cases for Phoenix and company to crack.

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The Wright Stuff

The secret to the Phoenix Wright series' success is that although the protagonist wears an attorney's badge, it's not really about laws or lawyers—it's more of an anime-inspired interactive mystery that happens to take place partially in a courtroom. The game doesn't stick to authentic legal proceedings (there's no jury, and suspects are decidedly not innocent until proven guilty), and the situations—which include psychic possession and murder by magic—are far from what's covered in the bar exam.

"Even though text-adventure games are not usually popular [in North America], there are also a great number of people who enjoy a good book or love drama shows, and I think this game appeals to that audience of people," says series producer Minae Matsukawa. "The over-the-top things that happen add to the overall depth of the cases themselves."

The creators of Phoenix Wright know that it's a mix of mystery, comedy, drama, and fantastic writing that made the first game a sleeper hit, and they're sticking to the same formula for Justice for All. Like its predecessor, Justice for All is a DS-enhanced adaptation of a Japan-exclusive GBA title, and just as in that game, Phoenix himself is a likable, good-natured guy. He might have earned himself a reputation as an ace attorney, but Phoenix isn't a legal whiz; he's often as dumbfounded as the players are, if not more so. He's also constantly the butt of abuse by the judge, the prosecution, and anyone else who stumbles by (psychiatric-ward inmates, monkeys, you name it).

"Phoenix . . . has that down-to-earth feel about him," Matsukawa comments. "You see Phoenix from a third-person perspective, but you also get a real sense of what goes on inside his head, especially when he's commenting on another character. His inner monologue and spoken words blend together to strike a good balance that gives the character more depth and personality that we feel people can really relate to."

Of course, Phoenix wouldn't be where he is without his supporting cast. Maya Fey, the younger sister of Phoenix's deceased mentor Mia, returns to assist Phoenix (and use her psychic abilities to channel her sister's spirit when the going gets tough), and goofy Detective Dick Gumshoe is on hand to inadvertently muck up the investigations. Even minor—but memorable—characters like small-time prosecutor Winston Payne, wannabe pro photographer Lotta Hart, and grumpy old Wendy Oldbag make return appearances. As for Phoenix's rival and friend Miles Edgeworth? We could explain how he fits into Justice for All, but that would be telling.

Naturally, there are plenty of new faces also showing up in Justice for All. In addition to numerous colorful witnesses and suspects, 18-year-old genius prosecutor Franziska von Karma takes a lead role as Phoenix's new rival; she's every bit as skilled in the courtroom as her father (who Phoenix ruined in the first game by exposing him as a criminal), and is fueled by the need for revenge. Also appearing is Maya's extended family, including her aunt, Morgan Fey, and her precocious 8-year-old cousin, Pearl (affectionately known as Pearls or Pearly), who may be the most gifted psychic communicator in the family.

Episode 1: The Lost Turnabout

Policewoman Maggey Byrde is in big trouble—she's accused of killing fellow officer Dustin Prince. To make matters worse, Phoenix has lost his memory after taking a blow to the head, and he doesn't even know who he is, let alone what he has to do to defend his client. Just what do the arrogant "drifting virtuoso" Richard Wellington and a circle of con artists have to do with the case? It's up to Phoenix to find out.

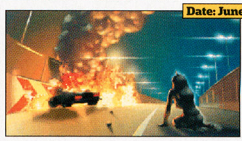
Witless for the Prosecution

As in the first Phoenix Wright, the gameplay is composed of courtroom and crime-scene-investigation segments. When court's in session, every witness that comes to the stand yields a back-and-forth battle of wits between Phoenix, the prosecutor, and the witness (who's inevitably lying through his or her teeth). The exchanges play out in dramatic, rapid-fire fashion, and your job is to pick apart witnesses' testimonies by yelling "Hold it!" into the DS's microphone (or pressing a button if you're too reserved for that) to get additional information. When you find a contradictory statement, it's time to present the incriminating evidence and holler "Objection!" to come one step closer to blowing the case wide open. There's nothing quite as satisfying as exposing a liar.

In investigation phases, Phoenix must seek out the clues and information he needs to piece together the truth and prove his clients' innocence. When you visit a crime scene, you can tap anywhere on the touch screen (or use a Control Pad-driven cursor) to learn more about the objects or the environment—if you're lucky, you'll turn up a crucial piece of evidence. You'll also bump into numerous bystanders who have stories to share. Using a menu-based interface, you can ask potential witnesses a variety of questions, and you can show them evidence or images of other characters to jog their memories.

Oh yeah, this guy's not lying. By presenting evidence, you can shatter witnesses' Psyche-Locks.

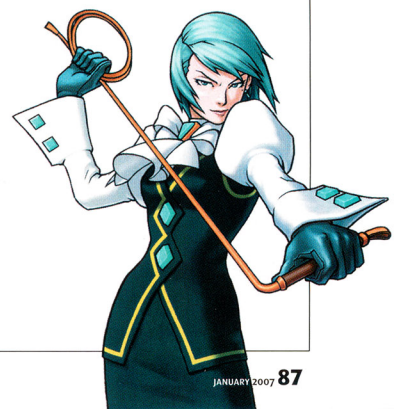
Episode 2: Reunion, and Turnabout



Set prior to the first episode, the second case is a flashback detailing how Phoenix and Maya reunited after Maya left at the end of the first game. Unfortunately, it's not under the best of circumstances—while Maya was attempting to channel a departed spirit, apparently it possessed her and caused her to murder the man she was trying to help! The episode takes you to Maya's remote hometown of Kurain Village.

In the game's second episode, Maya introduces Phoenix to a magical jewel called a magatama, which adds even more depth to investigations by revealing when witnesses are repressing the truth behind mental barriers called Psyche-Locks.

"I think the Psyche-Lock system is the one thing I am most proud of," states Matsukawa. "I think it was well implemented, and through it we were able to bring an



element of tension and suspense to the player during the investigation phase, as well as give the player a new way to view Phoenix. Before, it was simply 'defense attorney Phoenix,' but with this new addition, there's almost a 'detective Phoenix.'"

When you present the magatama to a witness who's blocking the truth with a Psyche-Lock, the game enters a brief one-on-one contest in which you must present pertinent evidence and answer questions correctly to break down their defenses. If you get the facts straight, the witness will spill the beans and give you the info you need to proceed; it not, you'll have to gather more info and try again.

Justice Is Served

Another enhancement made to Justice for All is the switch to a life-bar-style meter to track Phoenix's standing with the court. In his previous outing, Phoenix could make only five mistakes (each represented by an exclamation point), no matter how big or small, before his client was found guilty. Thanks to the new meter, you're now penalized in proportion to the severity of your error.

Clowns, photographers, detectives . . . Phoenix crosses all types of folks on the witness stand.

Which stings more: Franziska von Karma's whip or her very sharp tongue? You'll feel the fury of both.

The five-strikes-and-you're-out rule is one of the few criticisms of the original game that Matsukawa wanted to address in the sequel. "I feel that the life bar allows the players more chances and more variety, which makes the game less frustrating to play," she states. "That, combined with the Psyche-Lock system, which refills Phoenix's life bar [when you're successful], made for a perfect match."

Though a series of bad decisions will cost Phoenix the case, fledgling attorneys needn't worry about being overwhelmed. While veterans will enjoy the more-complex cases (the first case in Justice for All is about on par with the second case in the original), series newcomers will appreciate how the game eases them into the proceedings. In the opening case, Phoenix gets clobbered and suffers temporary amnesia, forcing him to relearn his art in the most entertaining way imaginable—and the cases only get bigger and more amusing from there.

Episode 3: Turnabout Big Top

Date: December 26

The greatest show on earth becomes the deadliest when Russell Berry, owner of the Berry Big Circus, is murdered. Strangely enough, the killer seems to have the ability to fly, making the prime suspect none other than master magician Maximillion Galactica. As Phoenix attempts to uncover the true criminal, he'll meet a cast of true oddballs, including a pitifully unfunny clown and a delusional ventriloquist.

If you're prepared for wacky situations and you're ready to stand up for the wrongly accused, you don't have long to wait—the game is scheduled for release in early 2007. And Capcom already has plans for the next game in the Ace Attorney series; although it has yet to be announced for North America, the developers are working on a new game created exclusively for the DS starring a brand-new lead lawyer. So where does that leave Phoenix and the conclusion of his trilogy, which was released on GBA in Japan?

"We would consider making it for DS if the demand for it was high enough," says Matsukawa, "so if you are interested, please let us know!"

Writing Wright

At least half of Phoenix Wright's success is a result of the fantastic localization by the folks at Capcom. We checked in with localizer Janet Hsu and editor Brandon Gay to learn what it's like putting words into Phoenix's mouth.

NP: How would you compare the localization of Phoenix Wright to other games you've worked on?
Janet Hsu: Compared with other titles I have worked on, I feel that Phoenix Wright demands a lot of yourself and your ability to understand the characters on a deeper level. Because some of the characters have a lot of depth to them, you almost have to become them in a sense to get the nuance and motivations in their lines right.

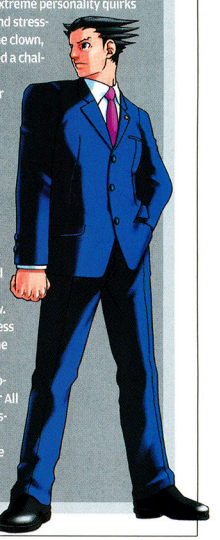
NP: What was your philosophy for determining North American character names?
Brandon Gay: A lot of the character names were determined with the Japanese names in mind. Some of the Japanese names were already quite clever, so we wanted to keep the same feel they had. Since there is so much underlying humor in Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney, we wanted the names to have the same type of double meanings that the Japanese names had.
NP: What were some of the most radical changes made to the characters or plot points?
JH: Plot-wise, we didn't have to change anything, but character-wise, we had a few things we had to change. For example, there is one character who is a bit on the perverse side of things, and while it's alright to make jokes about being perverse in Japanese culture, that sort of thing is not so welcomed in our own. . . .

NP: What were some jokes that had to be completely reworked from the Japanese version?
BG: A lot of the jokes that involve Phoenix's last name "Wright" were new jokes for the US version of the game. Since his name is not Phoenix Wright in the Japanese version, all of these jokes were new.

NP: In the first Phoenix, the setting seemed to intentionally not be specified, but in Justice For All, there's a distinctly Japanese village. How did you deal with cultural and geographic issues?
JH: Actually, we set the English version of the game to take place in Los Angeles, hence the time-difference puzzle in the first game. The cultural and geographical issues were not as big of a problem as some people might imagine. I personally feel that since the world of Phoenix Wright is clearly not our own, some differences can be allowed—if, say, the Fey family immigrated and then established their own village in a mountainous area of California. At least, that's how I rationalized it.

NP: What characters did you especially enjoy writing?
BG: Characters with extreme personality quirks are always both fun and stressful to write for. Moe the clown, for example, presented a challenge of writing for a clown who is no longer considered funny by anyone but himself. It was also important to show that this character had a big heart.

NP: What are your thoughts on Phoenix being successful enough to get a sequel in North America?
JH: All I can say is wow. I think Phoenix's success has surprised everyone here, but thank you, everyone, for your support. I hope Justice for All lives up to its predecessor, and please look forward to more of the Ace Attorney series in the future!



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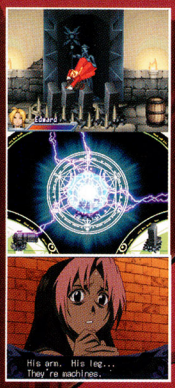

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10 Ways to Enjoy Your Island Getaway

There are thousands of ways to die in Yoshi's Island DS, and we're sharing only 10 tips to save your little dinosaur butt. It's our way of preparing you for harsh reality. Life is cruel, but not as cruel as some of the level design in this platformer.*

By Drew Williams

SHAMELESS PLUG FOR THE PLAYER'S GUIDE

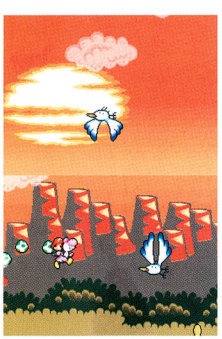
*Of course, the best way to save yourself is to employ detailed maps featuring callouts that refer to incredibly helpful tips. You can find such maps in The Official Nintendo Power Player's Guide for Yoshi's Island DS. You're welcome.

visit www.nintendopower.com/guides/island

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

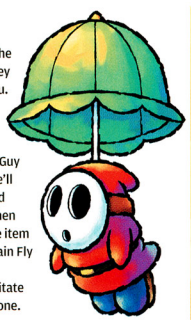
#1 FLUTTER FOR YOUR HEALTH

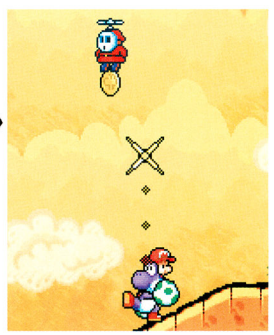
Fluttering seems like a nifty little bonus move at first, but it will become essential to your survival in the later stages of the game. Many platforms require a quick jump and flutter to slow your momentum, and some even require you to jump forward, drop below an obstacle, then flutter up to a platform. In rare cases, you'll need to make a sustained flight over chasms or spikes to reach safety. Practice your timing on long fights: you need to release then hold the B Button just as you begin to fall. Also handy: a flutter at the top of jumps to give yourself a slight boost to high platforms.



#2 FLY GUYS MUST DIE

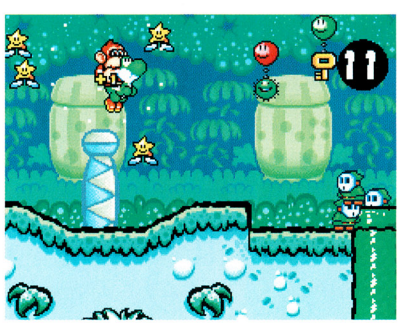
Fly Guys are among the toughest targets in the game: they move and are often far above you. Unfortunately, you can't just ignore them—they carry red coins that you'll need to unlock extra levels. Plus, if you hit a Fly Guy but not the item he's carrying, he'll drop it. Whenever possible, stand directly underneath a Fly Guy when you target it so you can catch the item if your egg misses its mark. Certain Fly Guys will disappear after a few moments onscreen, so don't hesitate to pull the trigger when you see one.





#3 A PERFECT SCORE IS IN THE STARS

Collecting and retaining 30 stars is usually the most difficult part of achieving a perfect 100-point score in a level. Each time your baby is knocked off Yoshi's back, your star count ticks away until you recover the tyke. You can slowly regenerate up to 10 stars, but you'll need to collect the remaining 20 within the level. Don't sweat a low star count early in the level, but start thinking about star preservation after you pass through the middle ring. When your count dips, never miss an opportunity to shoot a Winged Cloud.



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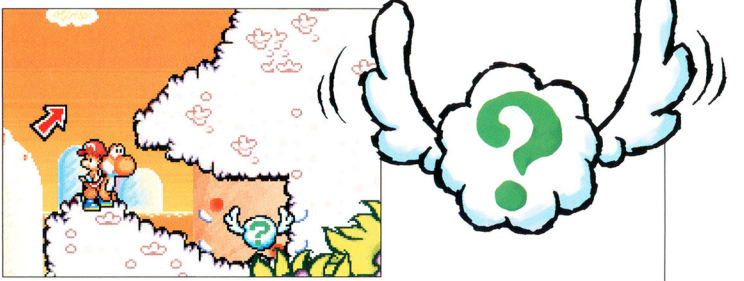
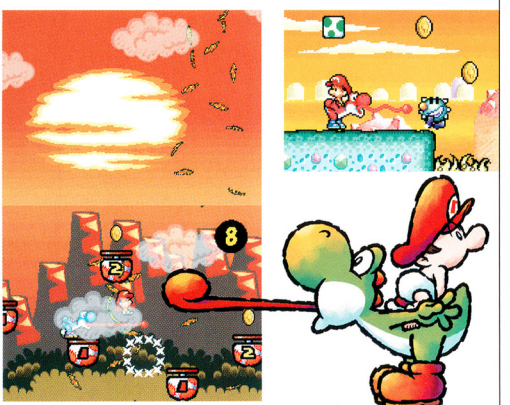
#4 HIDDEN WINGED CLOUDS

Some Winged Clouds contain items critical to finishing a level, and others contain stars, flowers, or 1-Ups. The problem is, some of the clouds are invisible until you walk over them or shoot them with an egg. If you see a suspicious Winged-Cloud-sized nook in the rocks behind a Piranha Plant, check it out. A few clouds will be out of sight until you shift your position to the bottom screen by pressing the L or X Button and pushing Up on the Control Pad at the same time.



#5 TRY THE TONGUE

You probably know that Yoshi's tongue is sticky, but did you know that it's well-nigh impervious to spike-covered foes? Use it to push indestructible Tap-Taps out of your way (but don't try that trick with Debulls). The tongue's most useful feature, however, is baby recovery. It's a bad idea to make a mad flutter toward your baby in some of the dangerous aerial or enemy-heavy levels. Instead, stay put on your platform and use your tongue to burst your baby's bubble.



#6 PATIENT POUNDING

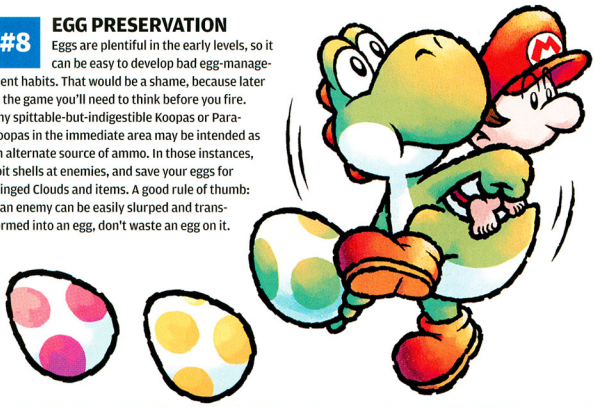
The pedestals that dot the landscape are the source of many red coins and other desirable items, but don't think you can simply ground-pound first and ask questions later. Some pedestals are strategically placed to give you access to higher platforms. Make sure you exhaust all item-collection opportunities before you pound down to the prize. You may also need to leave pedestals in place to halt a Chomp Rock's progress down a hill.

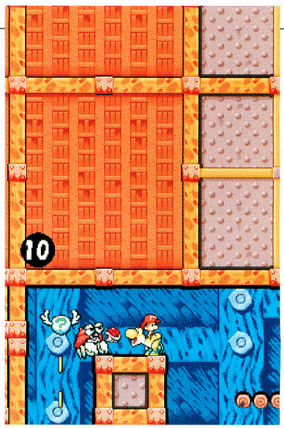
#7 FULL OF LIFE

Occasional bonus games between levels offer you the chance to pick up some extra lives the easy way. It's more convenient to access bonus games from the menu, but you'll need to earn 700 points in a given world to unlock that feature. Your effort will pay off when you need piles of extra lives to complete some tough levels in Worlds 4 and 5. World 3's menu-accessible bonus game, an easy memory game called Match, is the best way to rack up lives quickly—you can earn a 10-Up in one sitting!

#8 EGG PRESERVATION

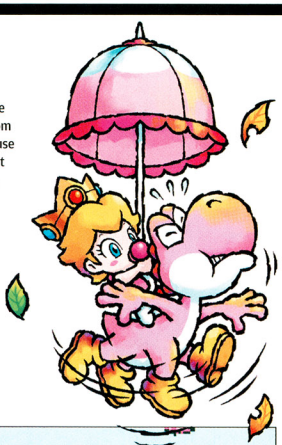
Eggs are plentiful in the early levels, so it can be easy to develop bad egg-management habits. That would be a shame, because later in the game you'll need to think before you fire. Any spittable-but-indigestible Koopas or Para-Koopas in the immediate area may be intended as an alternate source of ammo. In those instances, spit shells at enemies, and save your eggs for Winged Clouds and items. A good rule of thumb: if an enemy can be easily slurped and transformed into an egg, don't waste an egg on it.

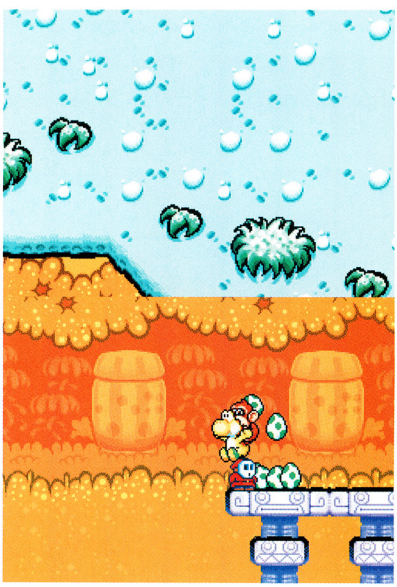




#9 EQUAL AND OPPOSITE REACTIONS

Baby Peach and Baby Wario have something in common (aside from their winning smiles): both can use their unique abilities to slingshot themselves to higher platforms. When using Peach to ride air currents, allow her to fall, then reopen her parasol to launch her to a higher spot than her original position. Wario can produce a similar result by pulling a magnetic platform down as far as possible, then jumping as the platform snaps back into position.





#10 SPIT TAKES

Some platforms seem impossible to reach until you bring a portable boost—carry an enemy to a nearby position, spit it onto a platform, then jump off its head to spring to a distant platform. The spitting doesn't end there: at certain points in the game, you'll need to slurp up a rotating wheel, ride a different arrow wheel, then switch to the one in your mouth to avoid contact with deadly spikes. The bottom line: it's good to transport large objects in your mouth.

ANY MORE REALISTIC AND YOU'D BE GROUNDED FOR MAKING SUCH A MESS.

Elebits™

When you hunt for Elebits you're bound to make a mess. The Wii Remote lets you throw stuff around like crazy while looking for them. So pick it up and go Elebits hunting. And don't worry. You won't get in trouble for trashing the place.

EVERYONE
E
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KONAMI
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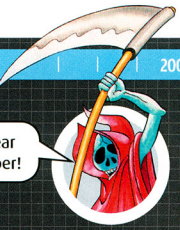
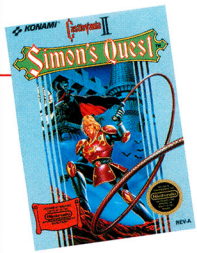
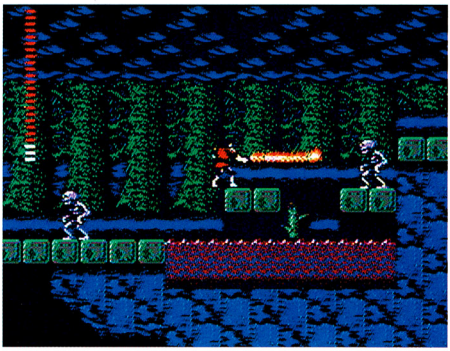


CASTLEVANIA II: SIMON'S QUEST



Whipping together excellent action and storytelling, Konami struck gold with the second Castlevania title.



PLATFORM: NES
DEVELOPER: KONAMI
PUBLISHER: KONAMI
RELEASE DATE: DECEMBER 1988
COVERED IN ISSUE: 2
NP COVERS FEATURING DECAPITATION: 1

Castlevania fans can argue for hours about which game in the fabled franchise is the best. But one thing no one can argue over is the impact that Castlevania II: Simon's Quest had on the series, and on video games in general.

Following up the smash hit Castlevania (which was pretty much a straight-up action game), Simon's Quest took the fledgling series in a whole new direction. It combined the frenzied monster-slaying action of the original game with RPG and adventure elements such as leveling up and plot-driven gameplay. While there were some quirky aspects to Simon's Quest (obtuse hints and poorly designed dungeons, for example), the game laid the framework for virtually all future Castlevania games.

Simon's Quest takes place seven years after the original Castlevania, in which Simon Belmont first slew Count Dracula. Before Dracula died, he put a curse on Simon that could be broken only by reviving Dracula. In the sequel, Simon must travel around Transylvania, collect scattered body parts of the deceased vampire, and return them to Castlevania to be reformed into a whole body. Once Simon succeeds in bringing Dracula back to life, the two adversaries must again duel for what Simon believes to be the last time.

The legacy of Simon's Quest's many innovations is apparent in new Castlevania games. This was the first game that featured nonlinear level design, and the ability to purchase weapons and items. And although the original Castlevania had breakable blocks that revealed secret items, Simon's Quest was the first game of the series to feature hidden passages.

Perhaps the most memorable aspect to Simon's Quest is its innovative day/night system. During your adventure, night would fall, making monsters more difficult to kill. Townsfolk would also retreat into their homes, forcing you to fend off monsters until day broke again. The system was simple but it introduced a gameplay aspect that has been copied many times in other franchises.

Around the Nintendo Power offices, the Simon's Quest cover that graced our magazine's second issue remains a legend. Made in the awesome, anything-goes '80s, the art featured a creepy knight in armor holding a freakin' *severed head*. NP took some flak for the cover's brutal depiction, but it stands as one of our favorite cover images of all time.
—CHRIS S.

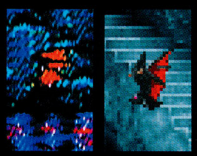
LONGTIME RIVALS

When people reminisce about the Castlevania series, they tend to spend a lot of time talking about the monsters. It's with good reason—the creatures that infest the newest Castlevania games have a lineage that stretches deep into the franchise's past. How the monsters appear, move, and attack in games like Dawn of Sorrow and Portrait of Ruin is in many ways the same as it has been since the beginning. Admittedly, some of Simon's Quest's enemies appeared in the first Castlevania game, but their legacy was truly established in the series' second effort. Check out a side-by-side gallery of these ghoulies next to their Portrait of Ruin counterparts.

MEDUSA HEADS

MERMEN

BATS



Have a favorite classic game you'd like to see revisited?
Send us your requests—we'll consider them for a future installment of Playback.
pulse@nintendopower.com

REVIEWS

In-depth reviews of the latest games

The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess is right on target.

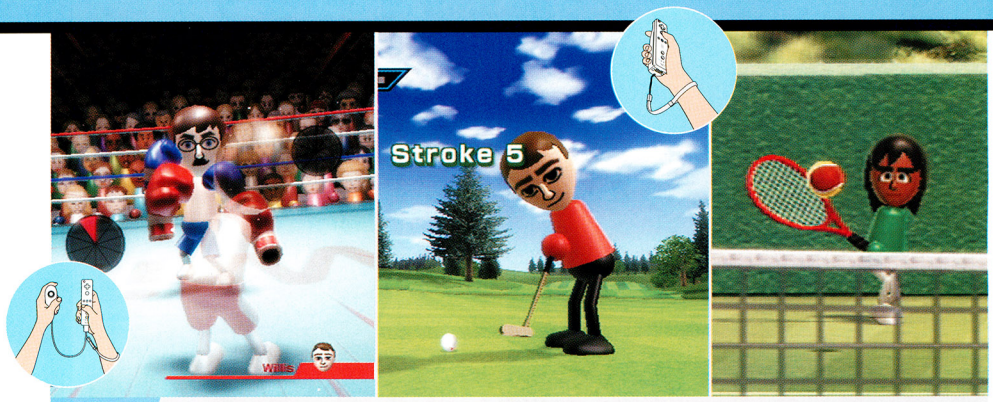
+

Rayman Raving Rabbids, Wii Sports, Red Steel, and much more.

110
How how high does Excite Truck fly? Check out our review.

116
We size up Lara Croft in Tomb Raider: Legend, her first Nintendo-console appearance.

100
If you're up for a supertough challenge, look no further than Yoshi's Island DS.



GOOD SPORT

IT'S A HIT

Wii SPORTS

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: NINTENDO
ESRB: EVERYONE

There's one game that everyone who buys a Wii console in its initial run will play. Reviewers Andy Myers and George Sinfield went a few rounds over Wii Sports.

AM: You really have to give it to Wii Sports. Not only is it the first game in ages to be packed in with a console on launch day; it really is the perfect showcase title for the Wii remote. Each of its five games—tennis, boxing, bowling, baseball, and golf—uses the controller in a very different way, and very well. But with another launch title sporting a whopping 70 minigames (Super Monkey Ball: Banana Blitz), and a number of other game collections on the horizon, does Wii Sports really stand up to the competition?

GS: The Wii Sports games are surprisingly robust. I could easily play any of them for more than an hour at a time or until I'm tuckered out from swinging the remote. (It's not just a showcase for motion control. It's the poster child for the necessity of the wrist strap, too.) The games are simplified and abbreviated versions of their sports, to be sure. In baseball, for example, the fielding and baserunning are taken care of automatically. In tennis, your characters run on their own, as well. But you do have complete control over the way that you hit the ball (hit it short, hit it long, spin it, lob it). The mode that delivers the complete experience for me is the Wii Sports Age test: the athletic equivalent of Brain Age's daily exercise. That and Training mode pull the sports together in a satisfying package. I also like the liberal use of the remote's speaker and rumble feature. The puzzling part about the game for me has been the wooden-toy look of the characters. Though the idea that you create a Mii representation of your Wii-playing personality is great, the simplistic caricature art style may make some people think that the game is not as deep as it actually is.

AM: I actually don't mind the Miis—they give the game style. Besides, I think the graphical quality in Wii Sports will likely surprise a few people. Once you spend some time on the golf course (nine of NES Golf's holes brought to life in 3-D) using a widescreen television, you'll forgive the simplistic graphics of the character models. But Wii Sports is not about graphics—it's about control. I usually approach sports games with a decent amount of uncertainty, but I find almost every game in Wii Sports to be incredibly inviting. There is a lot of depth to the gameplay, but it's usually well-hidden because the controls are mapped so well to a human being's natural movements. I actually play better when I'm just trying to have fun and not thinking about moving. The only game that doesn't feel quite so natural to me is boxing—but on that note, it is probably the deepest of the five games.

GS: There were lots of ways that motion control could have gone wrong, but in Wii Sports it lives up to its promise; it's intuitive and perfectly responsive. If you need to use a backhand stroke in tennis, you simply make a backhand motion while holding the remote. It's the textbook definition of pick-up-and-play gaming. The developers' desire to create immediate satisfaction with no learning curve must be the reason for the stripped-down nature of the games. Realistic sports sims can be intimidating for those who aren't experts on the sport, but you need only a basic knowledge of the rules to enjoy Wii Sports. Boxing is tougher than the others. But it's still good exercise just to punch away.

AM: Speaking of exercise, my arm is still sore from playing the game so much. I don't know if that speaks more to how much you'll be moving, or to how out of shape I am—but there really is nothing else out there quite like Wii Sports. My only gripe is that I think it could have used a few more sports. The whole fitness aspect is cool, but in the single-player game you'll experience everything Wii Sports has to offer in a matter of hours. Then again, the game does come free with the console, so I'll stop whining.

GS: The single-player game is good for practice and daily tests, but Wii Sports shines as a multiplayer game. One of the great things about motion control is how it gets everyone in the room involved. I can see a lot of nongamer friends and family members of Wii players getting hooked.

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT GAME WILL YOU TAKE HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS?

With a little time off and a lot of games to play, we ask our reviewers what they'll play during the holidays.

CHRIS HOFFMAN

I've gotta go with Castlevania: Portrait of Ruin. Single-player mode is great as usual, and I can't wait to play co-op with my friends.

CHRIS SHEPPERD

I have a coupla long car rides ahead of me, so I'm sticking with RPGs. I'm thinking that FINAL FANTASY V oughta do the trick.

ANDY MYERS

What better way to celebrate Thanksgiving than with Trauma Center: Second Opinion? It will be good practice for carving the turkey.

GEORGE SINFIELD

The multiplayer games on Wii—Madden, Wii Sports, Super Monkey Ball—are going to get a workout at my holiday gatherings.

STEVE THOMASON

I'm going to stuff my self silly (mmm . . . pie), then lie on the couch and play Portrait of Ruin while the Vikings kill the Packers on TV.

PETE MICHAUD

I can't wait to be in my socks, sippin' eggnog, while I play through Zelda from start to beautiful finish. 'Tis the season to be jolly.

SCOTT PELLAND

I have one wish—FINAL FANTASY III and enough time to lose myself in it. Or is that two wishes?

DREW WILLIAMS

I'm going to start playing Twilight Princess during my 10 minutes of free time each day. I'll be done sometime in late 2008.

CASEY LOE

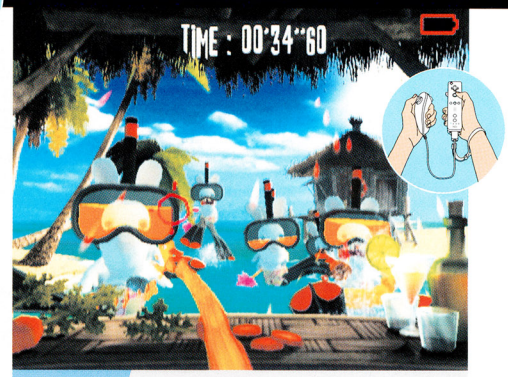
My family is a lost cause—even Brain Age has baffled them. But I bet I can get my girlfriend hooked on Elite Beat Agents.

SPLINTER CELL: DOUBLE AGENT

RATING: 6.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT**
ESRB: **MATURE**

Even as people are realizing the amazing potential of the Wii, there are still plenty of questions about how the unique controller will work with traditional games. Undoubtedly, one of its first major tests is Splinter Cell: Double Agent, a well-established franchise in a well-established genre. The Wii version of this highly anticipated game is fundamentally the same as the GCN version we reviewed last month, but the controls have been completely revamped. Overall, the conversion works—the camera control via the Wii remote is fluid and precise, and the button mapping is intuitive. Jolting the nunchuk vertically will make you jump, and sliding it to one side will make you hug a nearby wall; it takes a while to find discreet motions that won't set off the wrong move, but it works in the end. I'm still not used to stretching my thumb up to use the Control Pad on the top of the Wii remote—it's a long way to reach, even for my rather normal hands. You have to do it a lot, too, for tasks such as switching cameras and weapons. The graphics are a little disappointing—besides some added lighting effects and better in-game videos, there aren't a lot of improvements over the GCN version. Ubisoft needs to look only as far as their own Red Steel and Rayman Raving Rabbids to know that the Wii is more powerful than what they're displaying here. —**CHRIS S.**



SILLY RABBIDS

BITE-SIZED INSANITY

RAYMAN RAVING RABBIDS

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT MONTPELLIER**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

After months of rabid anticipation for Rayman's latest adventure, I have to say that I'm a little disappointed with the final product. It's still a lot of fun (especially multiplayer), and those hysterical rabbids regularly had me busting a gut, but there's not nearly as much to the game as I was hoping for. To begin with, it's almost entirely devoid of story—there's an underwhelming cut-scene at the beginning of the game, another one at the end, and that's it. Worse, quite a few of the elements that the team previewed for us months ago have either been stripped down (your prison cell goes through three preset renovations rather than gradually upgrading to reflect your success) or are nowhere to be seen. The game just seems incredibly rushed, and I'm not sure why Ubisoft felt the need to get it out by the Wii's launch (the publisher has plenty of other Wii titles ready for the holidays). The company has been insisting for the longest time that this wouldn't be simply a collection of minigames, but in the end that's exactly what it is.

That said, it's a pretty phenomenal collection of minigames. The developers have utilized the Wii controller in just about every way fathomable, from plucking worms out of a rabbid's rotting teeth to steering Rayman through rings, Pilotwings-style, as he plummets toward the earth. My personal favorite is the dancing game, which plays a bit like the Sega arcade/Dreamcast classic Samba de Amigo, and features hilariously rabbid-ized versions of popular songs (though it'd be nice if there were more than a handful of tracks). In addition to the sheer gameplay variety, Raving Rabbits shines because there's so much imagination behind the way all of the minigames are presented. Everything is wonderfully off-kilter, and little touches like particularly tough rabbids wearing Sam Fisher-style goggles go a long way. The team obviously had a blast making Raving Rabbids; I only wish they had prolonged that enjoyment to deliver a meatier game. —**STEVE T.**

AT LONG LAST

THE STRONGEST LINK

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS

RATING: 9.5
PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: NINTENDO
ESRB: TEEN

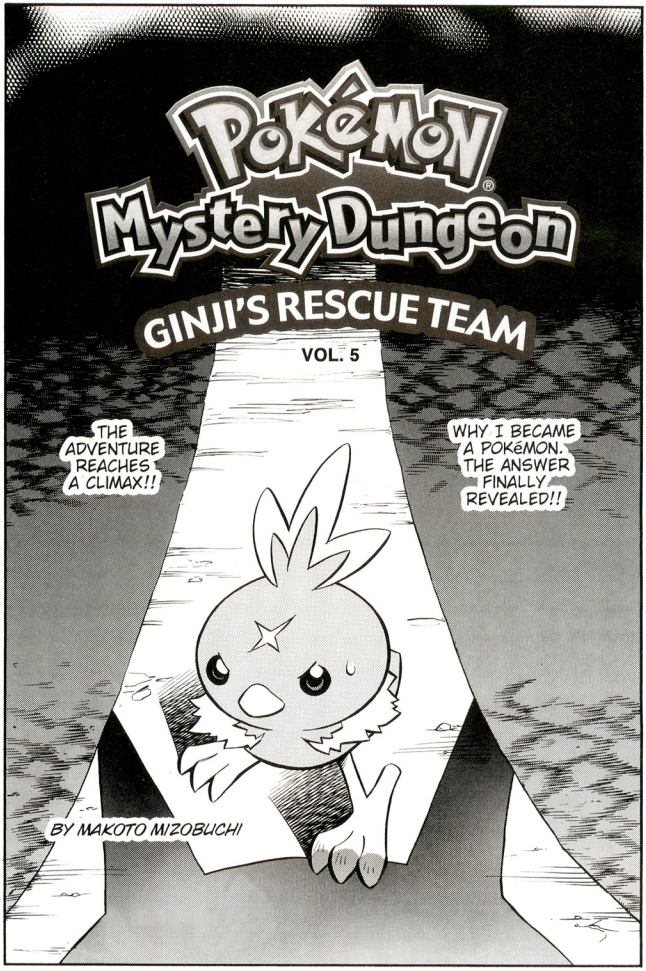
The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess is more than just the realization of the most anticipated game in memory. It's a love letter to Nintendo fans around the world that says, "Sorry I'm late, but you'll find that the wait was worth it." Twilight Princess almost has it all: amazing looks, an epic story, an exemplary balance of puzzles and action, a vast world, interesting minigames, and that requisite thrill of exploration that makes every Zelda game so special. Perfect? Not quite. But Twilight Princess offers such great gameplay and so much of it that I can't consider the game anything less than a masterpiece.

At its core, Twilight Princess delivers the same awesome adventuring as previous games in the series, but Hyrule has never seemed so real and alive. Even before Link embraces his destiny as a hero, he feels like an authentic person with a real life and actual friends, not just a character created for a quest. Link can fish, herd, explore, interact with animals, help his neighbors, and play with the local village kids—and that's before the action even begins. Once Link's peaceful village life is disrupted by the encroaching twilight, the game slowly opens up to reveal the biggest Zelda adventure ever, featuring no fewer than four villages, six provinces, nine dungeons, and tons of wilderness to explore, from the traditional grassy plains of Hyrule Field to the sands of the Gerudo Desert to the chilly slopes of Snowpeak. As Zelda games go, the title's scope is simply unprecedented. Thank goodness for Epona's convenient transportation and the inclusion of horseback swordplay.

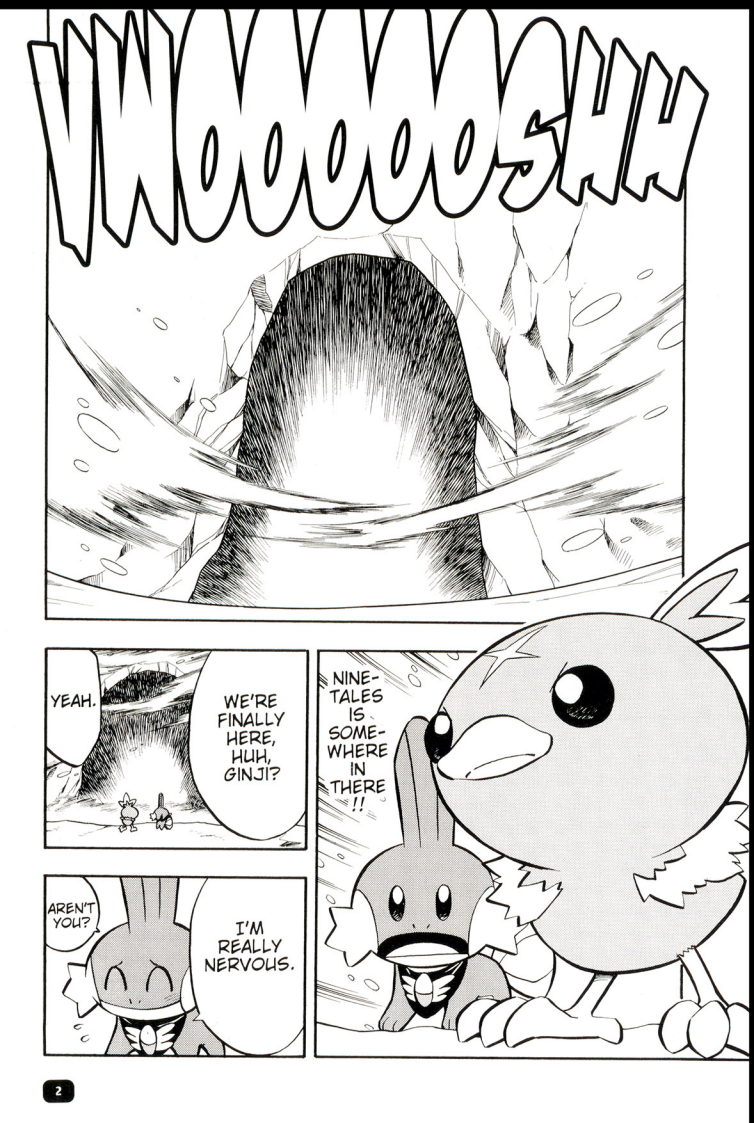
The game world is made even better by some truly spectacular visuals. Even though technology has advanced since Twilight Princess was first revealed a couple of years ago, the game still looks astonishing. The model and texture work throughout the entire game are gorgeous, the environments appear thoroughly organic, and the mature artistic style maintains the perfect balance between realism and fantasy. Like Ocarina of Time, the game utilizes a pseudo-real-time day-night cycle, and it gives Twilight Princess a chance to truly shine through spectacular lighting effects—there's nothing quite like riding through the plains of Lanayru Province as the sun sets. The Twilight Realm, with its unsettling palette and oversaturated lighting, looks arguably even more remarkable.

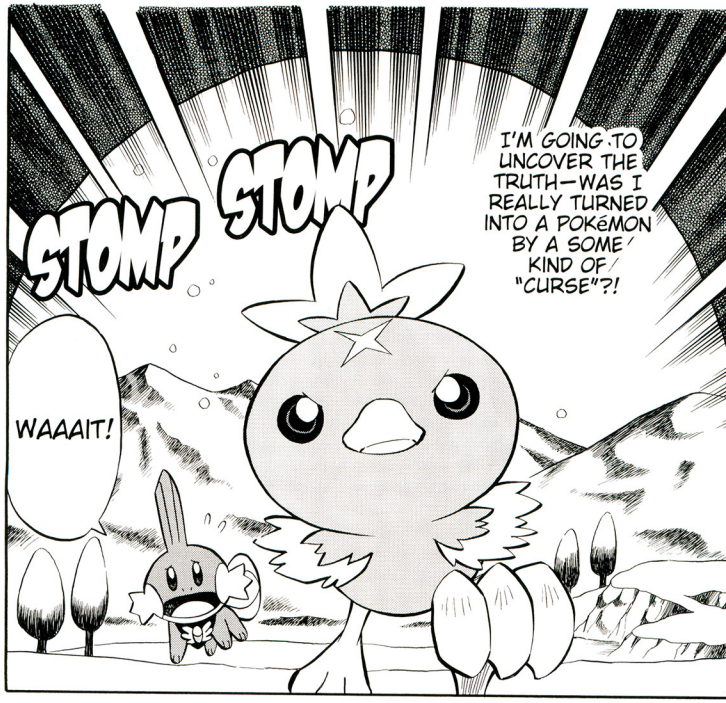
The Zelda games have always emphasized gameplay above all else, and, unsurprisingly, Twilight Princess delivers in that department too. Link's familiar lock-on combat works great, and you'll have no trouble adapting to the Wii's remote-swinging slashes or nunchuk-shaking spin attack. Better yet, you'll learn seven hidden skills over the course of the adventure—from a downward stab (shades of Zelda II) to an enhanced spin attack—that continuously add new aspects to the combat. Of course, half of the Zelda franchise's appeal stems from the fantastic tools and weapons that help you advance through the quest, and they're in no short supply in Twilight Princess. Between creative uses for returning favorites (like the option to equip the Hero's Bow with a sniperlike scope and the ability to use two Clawshots simultaneously) and the addition of new items (such as a wall-climbing device called the Spinner and a slow but powerful ball and chain), Link's arsenal has never been more diverse. The benefits of the Wii controller are especially evident when it comes to Link's weapons; pointing and aiming with the boomerang, bow, and other items works beautifully.

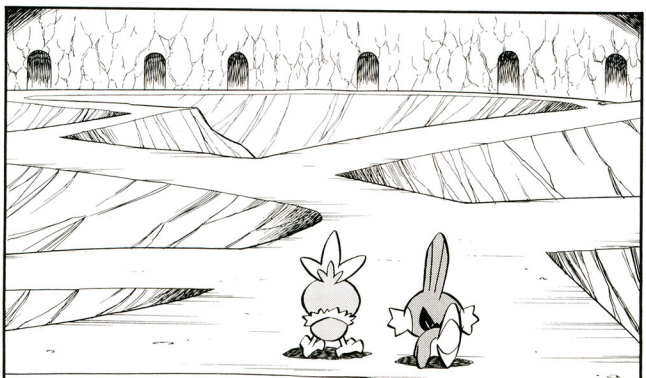
Twilight Princess's dungeons are

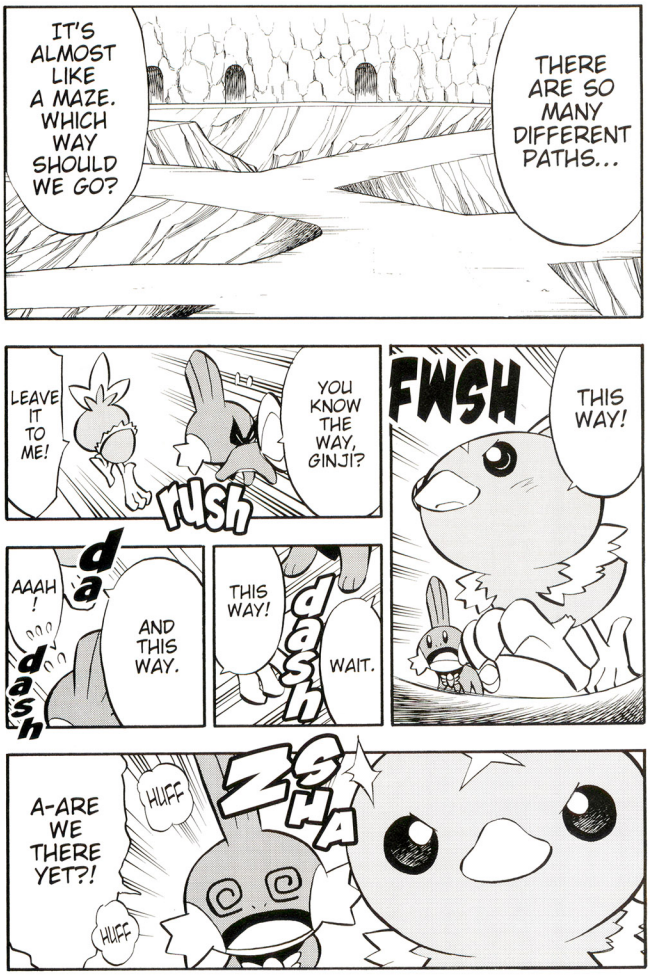

Pokémon
Mystery Dungeon
GINJI'S RESCUE TEAM
VOL. 5
THE ADVENTURE REACHES A CLIMAX!!
WHY I BECAME A POKéMON. THE ANSWER FINALLY REVEALED!!
BY MAKOTO MIZOBUCHI

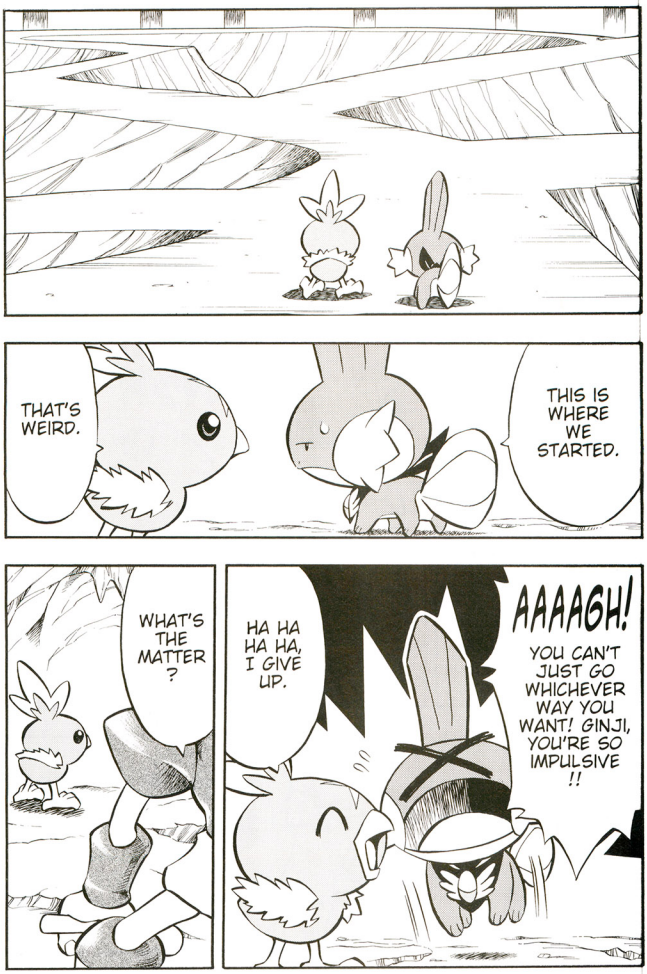
VS ARTICUNO—
VS MOLTRES—
VS ZAPDOS—
GRR. THAT GINJI.
TSK
HE SURVIVED ALL THOSE BATTLES.
BETTER BUY ME SOME MORE TIME...
HWOOOH

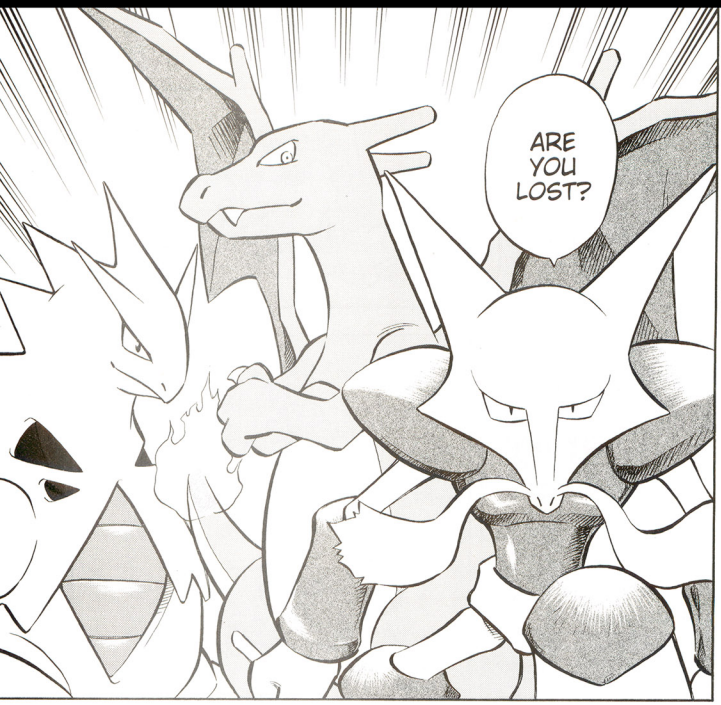

WOOOOOSHH
YEAH.
WE'RE FINALLY HERE, HUH, GINJI?
NINE-TALES IS SOME-WHERE IN THERE !!
AREN'T YOU?
I'M REALLY NERVOUS.

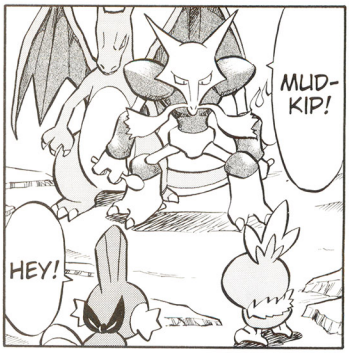

STOMP
STOMP
I'M GOING TO UNCOVER THE TRUTH—WAS I REALLY TURNED INTO A POKéMON BY A SOME KIND OF "CURSE"?!
WAAAIT!

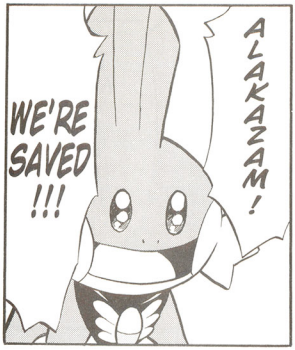


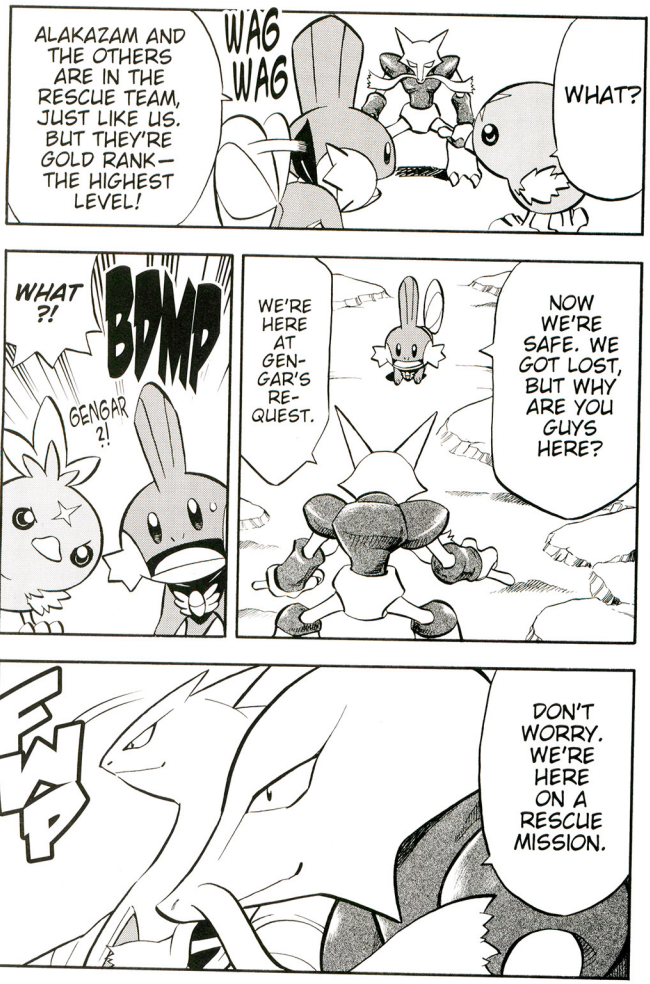

IT'S ALMOST LIKE A MAZE. WHICH WAY SHOULD WE GO?
THERE ARE SO MANY DIFFERENT PATHS...
LEAVE IT TO ME!
rush
YOU KNOW THE WAY, GINJI?
FWSH
THIS WAY!
AAAH!
dash
AND THIS WAY.
THIS WAY!
dash
WAIT.
A-ARE WE THERE YET?!
HUFF
HUFF
ZSHA

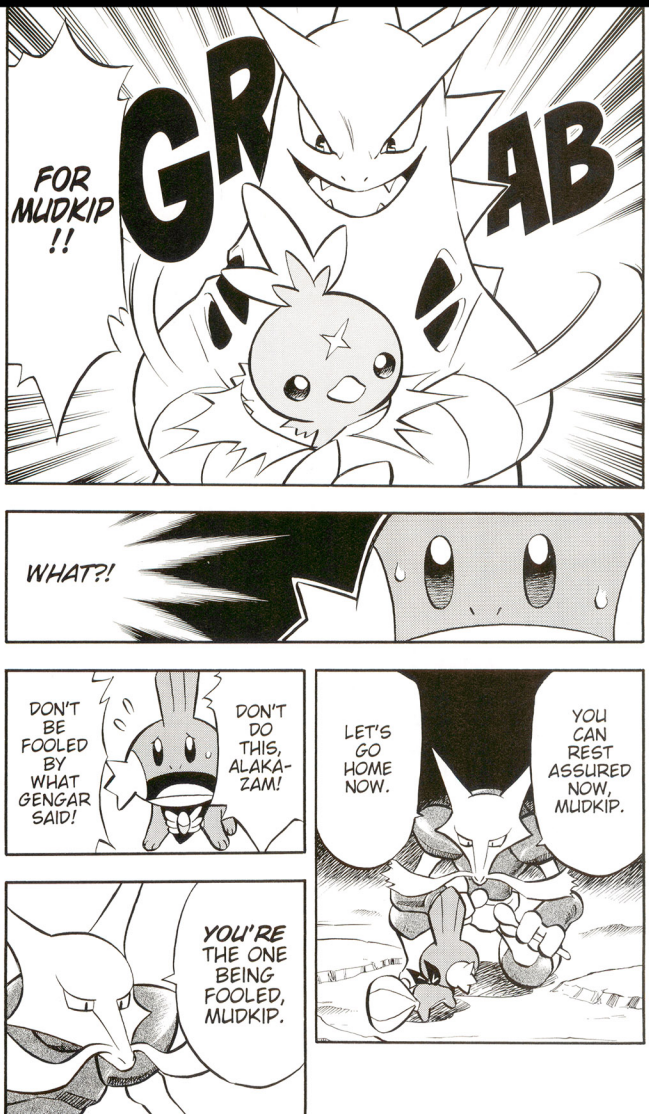

THAT'S WEIRD.
THIS IS WHERE WE STARTED.
WHAT'S THE MATTER ?
HA HA HA HA, I GIVE UP.
AAAAGH!
YOU CAN'T JUST GO WHICHEVER WAY YOU WANT! GINJI, YOU'RE SO IMPULSIVE !!

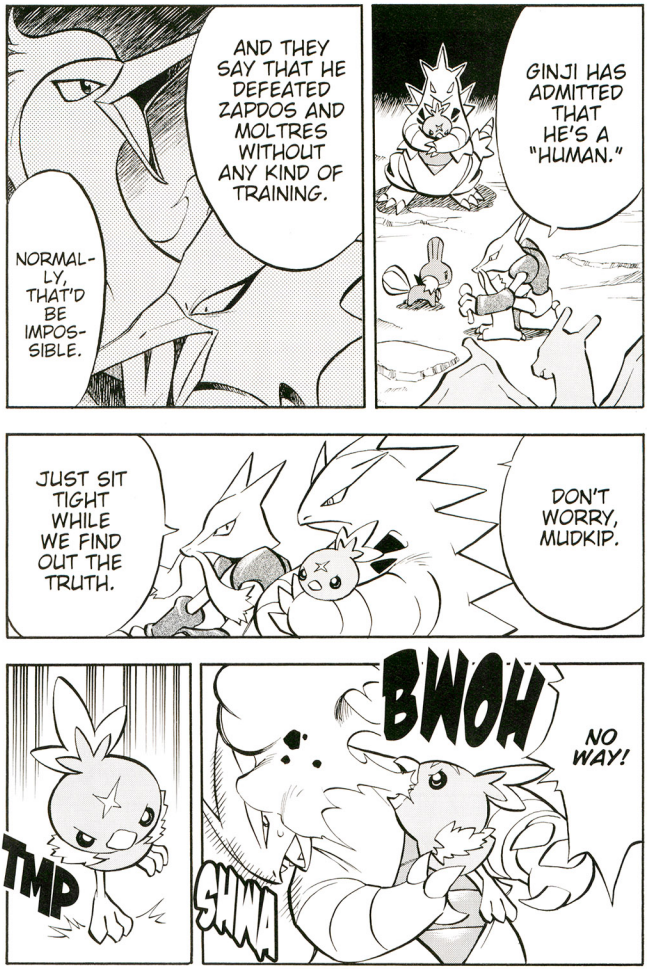

ARE YOU LOST?

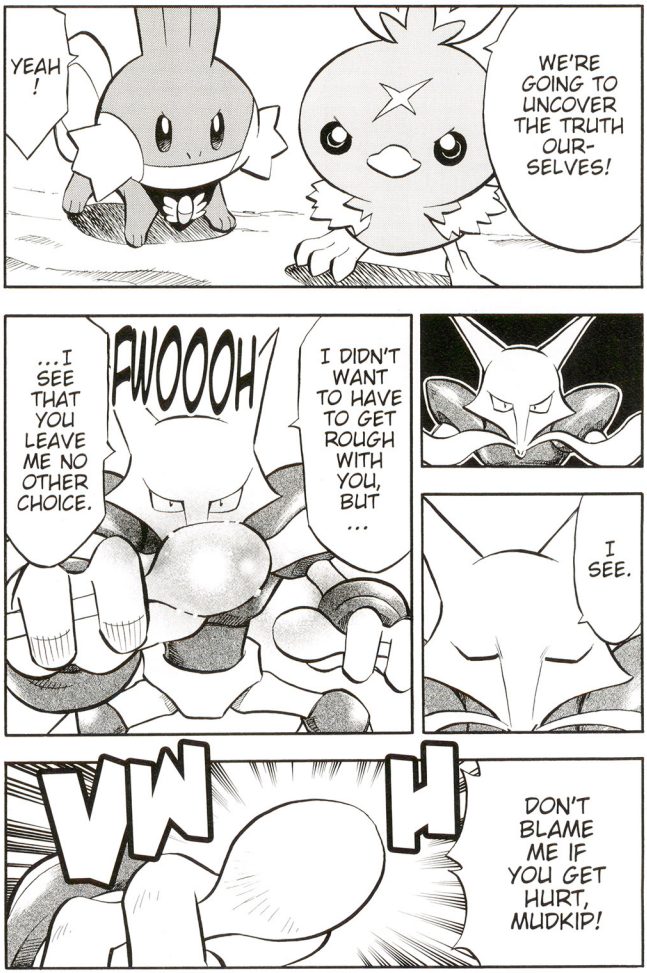

MUD-KIP!
HEY!

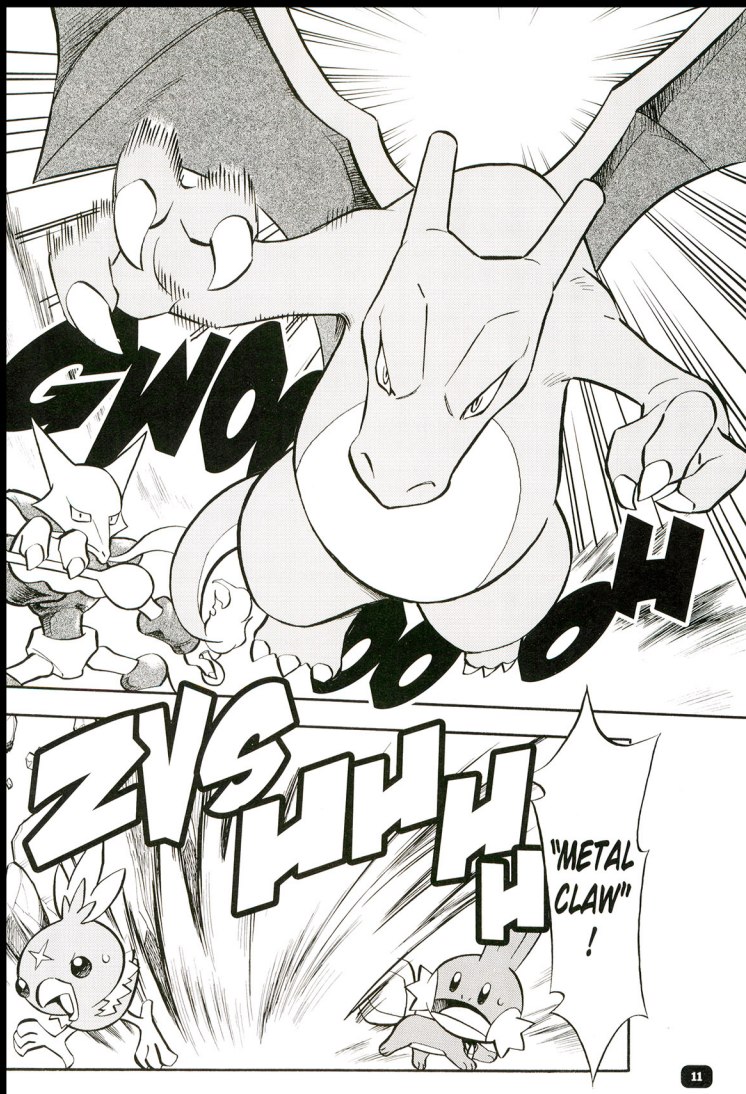

ALAKAZAM!
WE'RE SAVED !!!

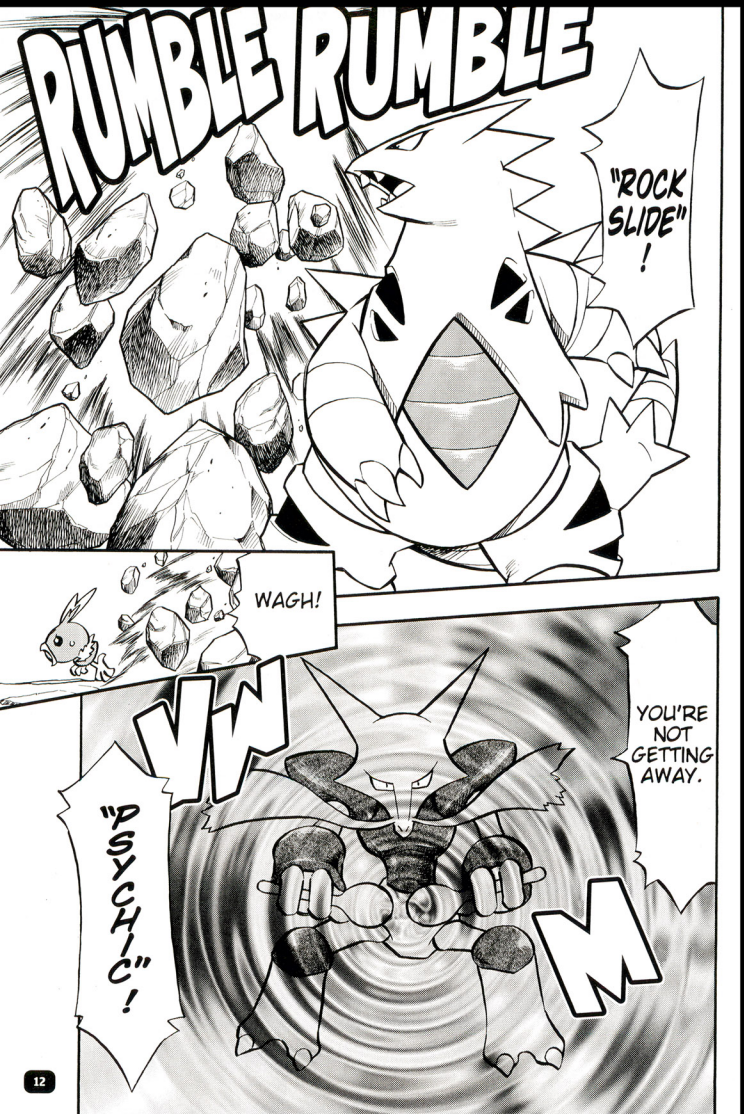

ALAKAZAM AND THE OTHERS ARE IN THE RESCUE TEAM, JUST LIKE US. BUT THEY'RE GOLD RANK— THE HIGHEST LEVEL!
WAG WAG
WHAT?
WHAT?!
BDMP
GENGAR?!
WE'RE HERE AT GENGAR'S REQUEST.
NOW WE'RE SAFE. WE GOT LOST, BUT WHY ARE YOU GUYS HERE?
FWP
DON'T WORRY. WE'RE HERE ON A RESCUE MISSION.

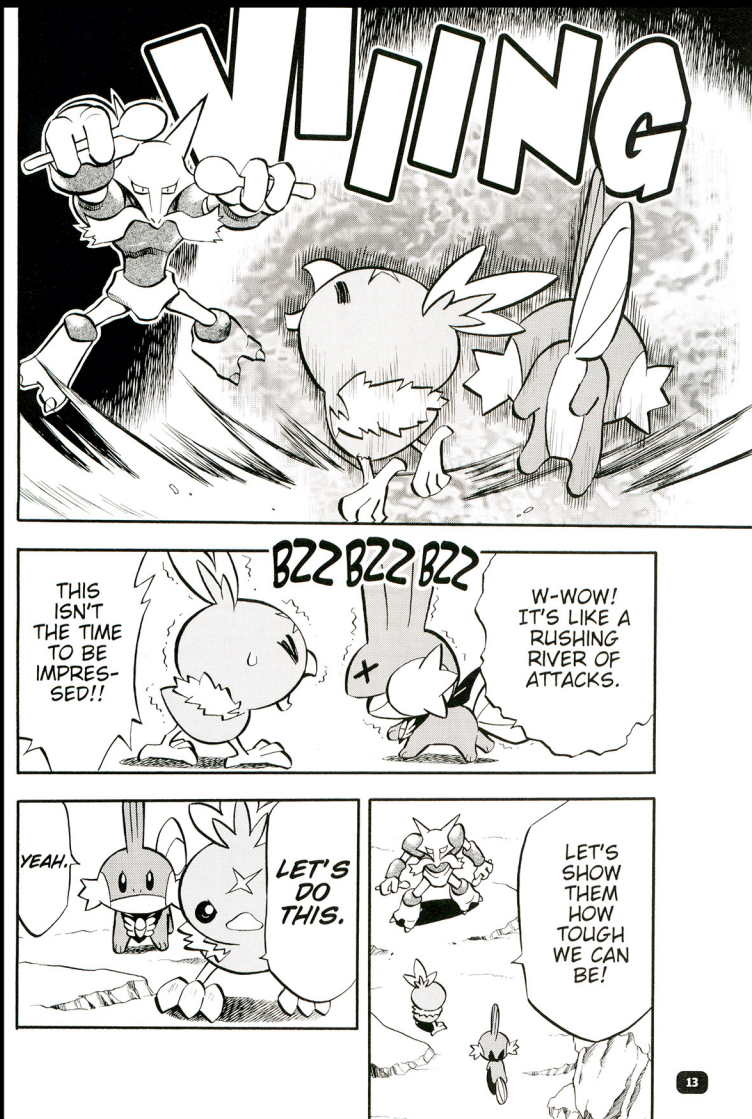

FOR MUDKIP !!
GR
AB
WHAT?!
DON'T BE FOOLED BY WHAT GENGAR SAID!
DON'T DO THIS, ALAKA-ZAM!
YOU'RE THE ONE BEING FOOLED, MUDKIP.
LET'S GO HOME NOW.
YOU CAN REST ASSURED NOW, MUDKIP.

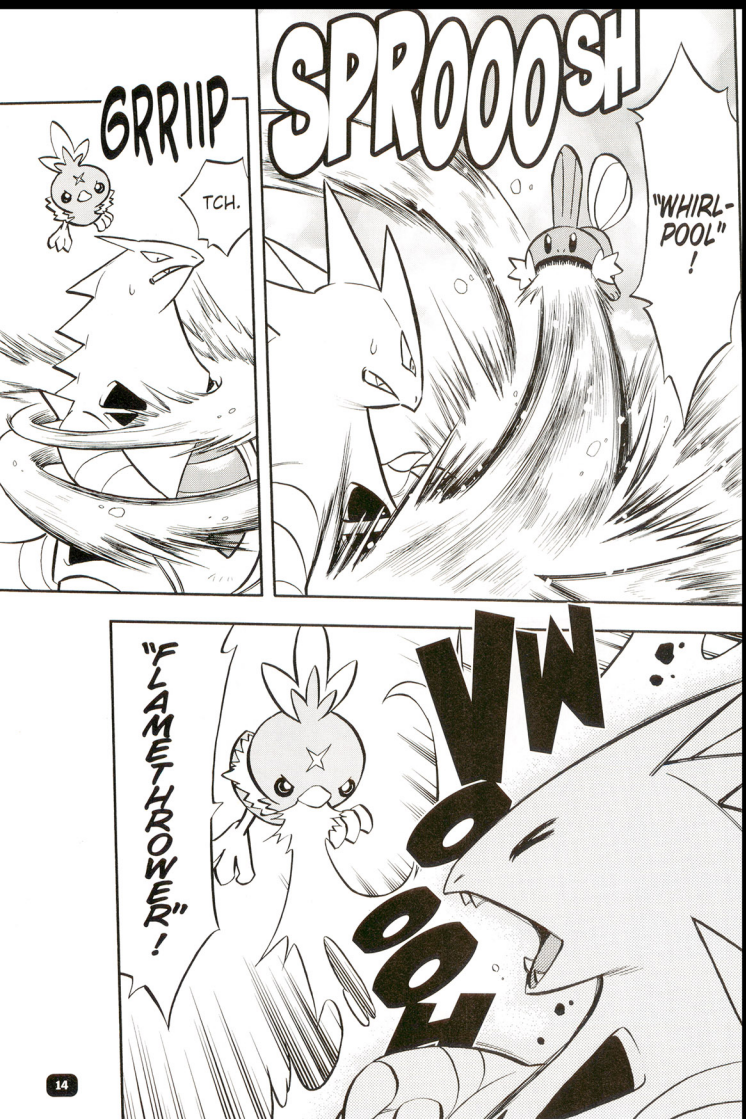

AND THEY SAY THAT HE DEFEATED ZAPDOS AND MOLTRES WITHOUT ANY KIND OF TRAINING.
NORMALLY, THAT'D BE IMPOSSIBLE.
GINJI HAS ADMITTED THAT HE'S A "HUMAN."
JUST SIT TIGHT WHILE WE FIND OUT THE TRUTH.
DON'T WORRY, MUDKIP.
TMP
BWOH
NO WAY!
SHWA

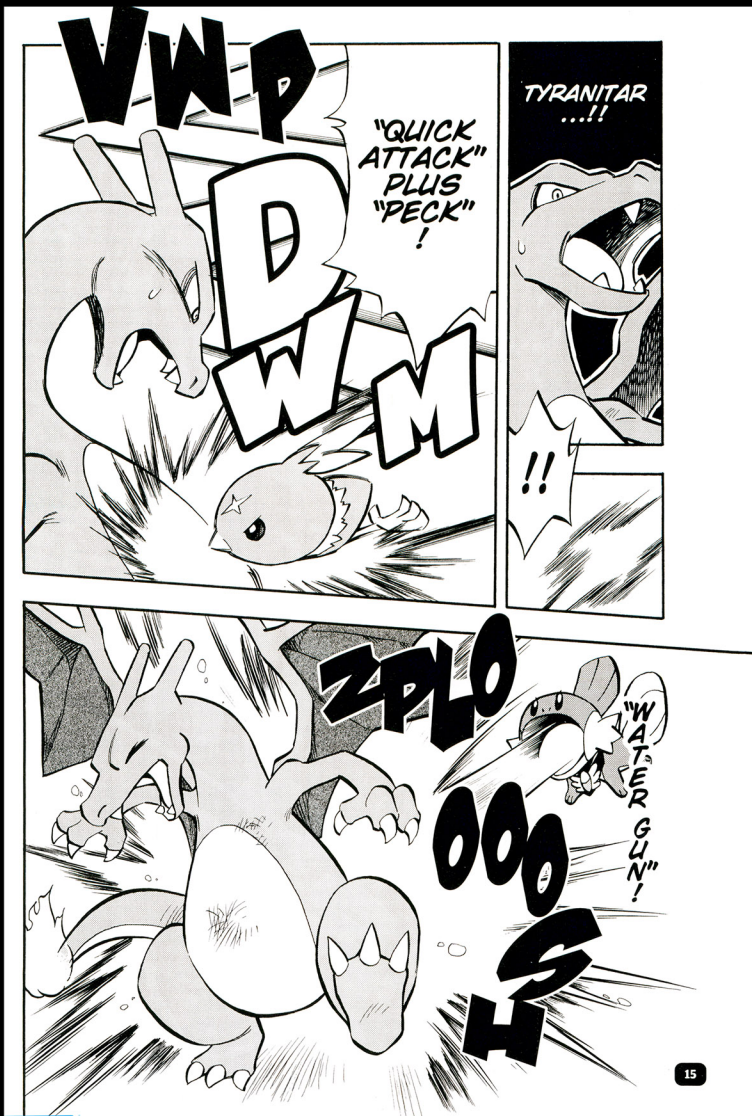

YEAH!
WE'RE GOING TO UNCOVER THE TRUTH OUR-SELVES!
...I SEE THAT YOU LEAVE ME NO OTHER CHOICE.
FWOOOH!
I DIDN'T WANT TO HAVE TO GET ROUGH WITH YOU, BUT ...
I SEE.
VWH
DON'T BLAME ME IF YOU GET HURT, MUDKIP!

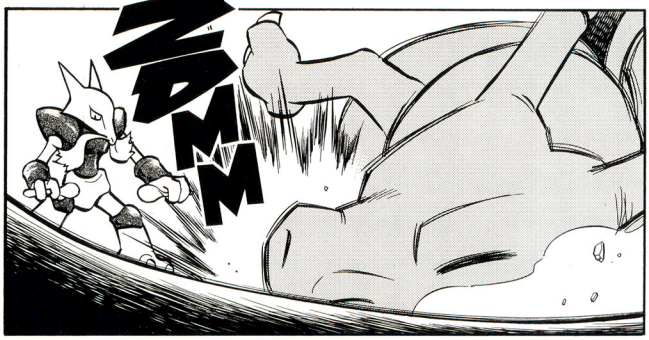

GWO
OH
ZVSHHHH
"METAL CLAW"!

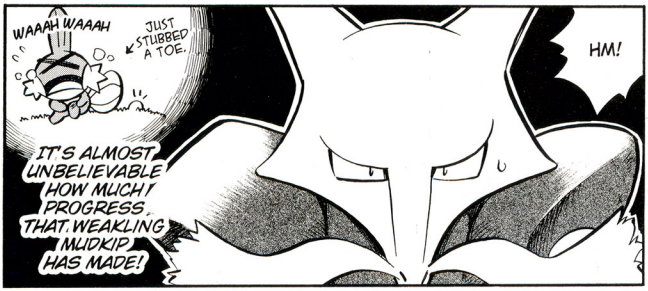

RUMBLE RUMBLE
"ROCK SLIDE"!
WAGH!
YOU'RE NOT GETTING AWAY.
"PSYCHIC"!

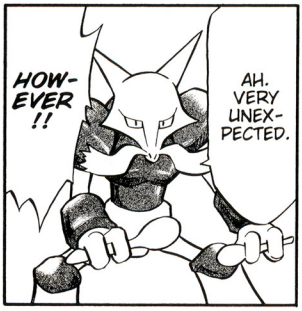

KLING
BZZ BZZ BZZ
THIS ISN'T THE TIME TO BE IMPRES-SED!!
W-WOW! IT'S LIKE A RUSHING RIVER OF ATTACKS.
YEAH.
LET'S DO THIS.
LET'S SHOW THEM HOW TOUGH WE CAN BE!

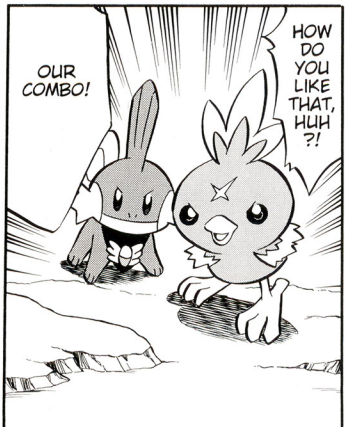

GRRIIP
TCH.
SPROOOSH
"WHIRL-POOL"!
"FLAMETHROWER"!
VWOOOSH

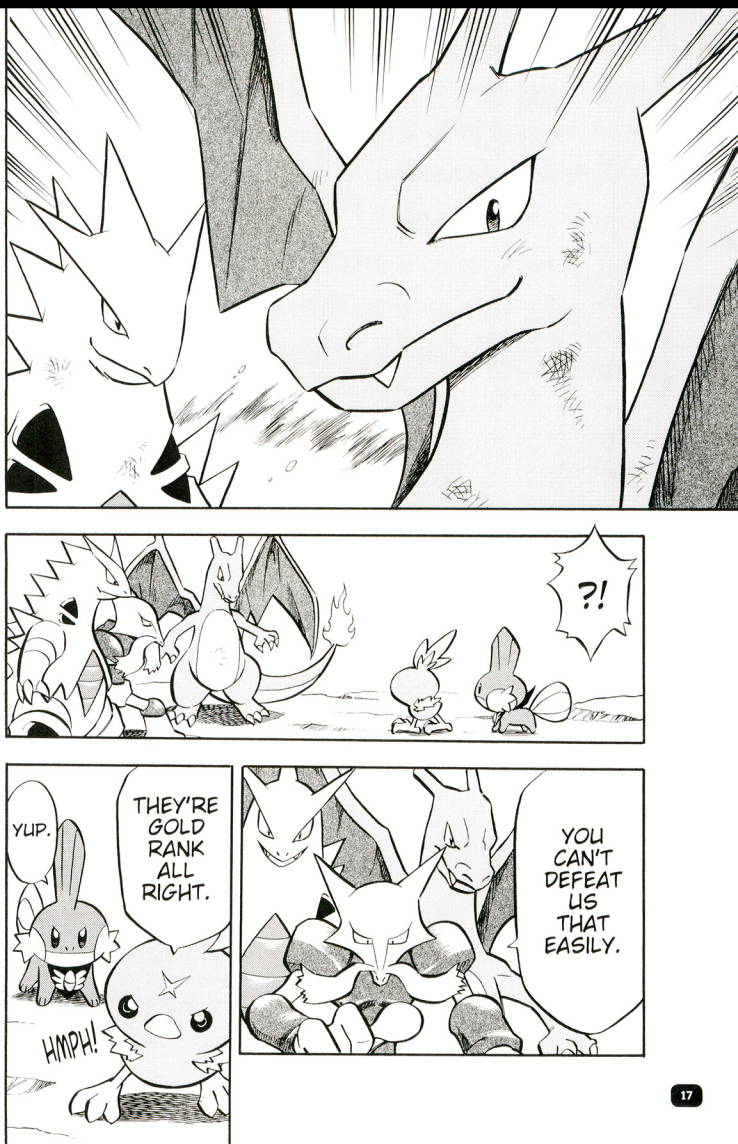

VWP
D
W
M
"QUICK ATTACK" PLUS "PECK"!
TYRANITAR ...!!
!!
ZPLO
OOOSH
"WATER GUN"!

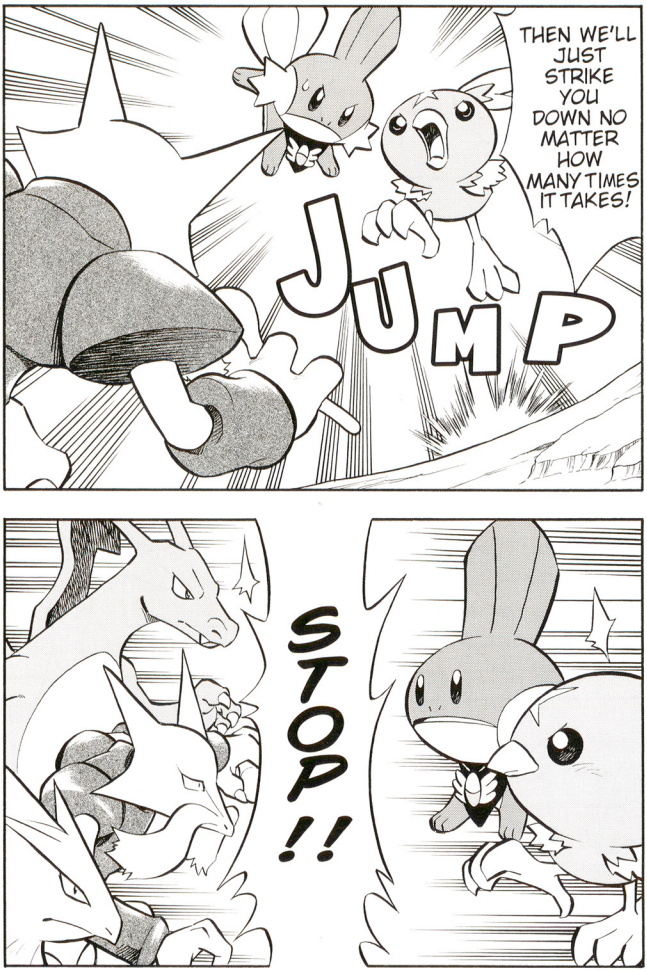

ZDMMM

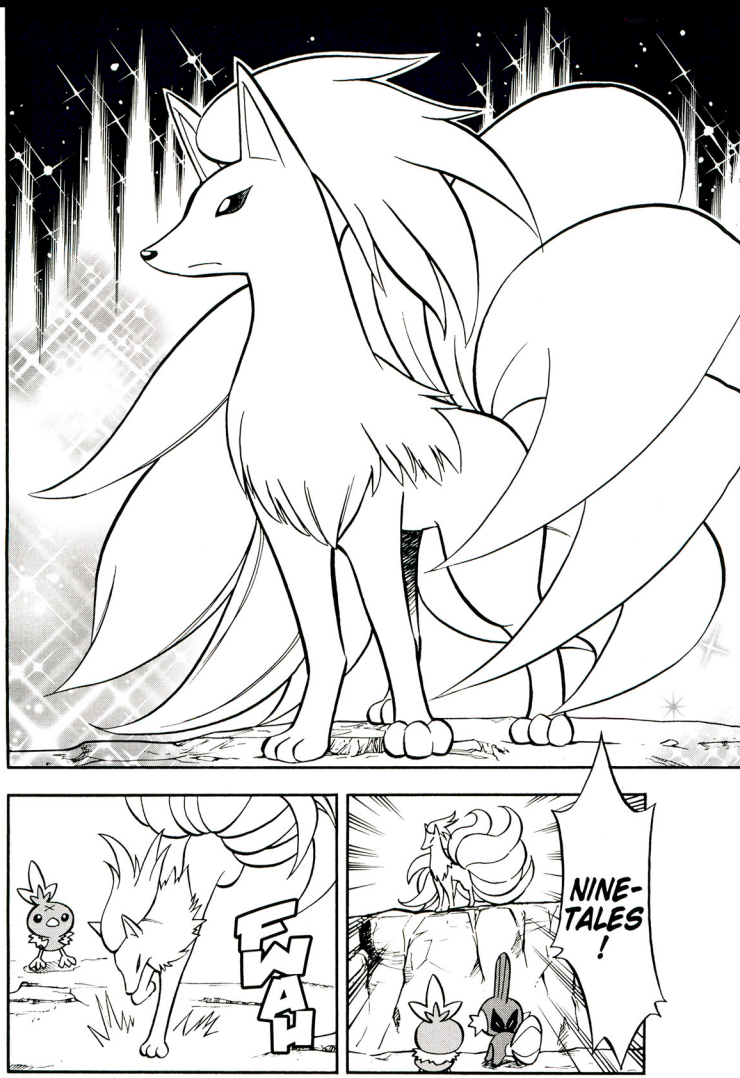

WAAAH WAAAH
JUST STUBBED A TOE.
HM!
IT'S ALMOST UNBELIEVABLE HOW MUCH PROGRESS THAT WEAKLING MUDKIP HAS MADE!

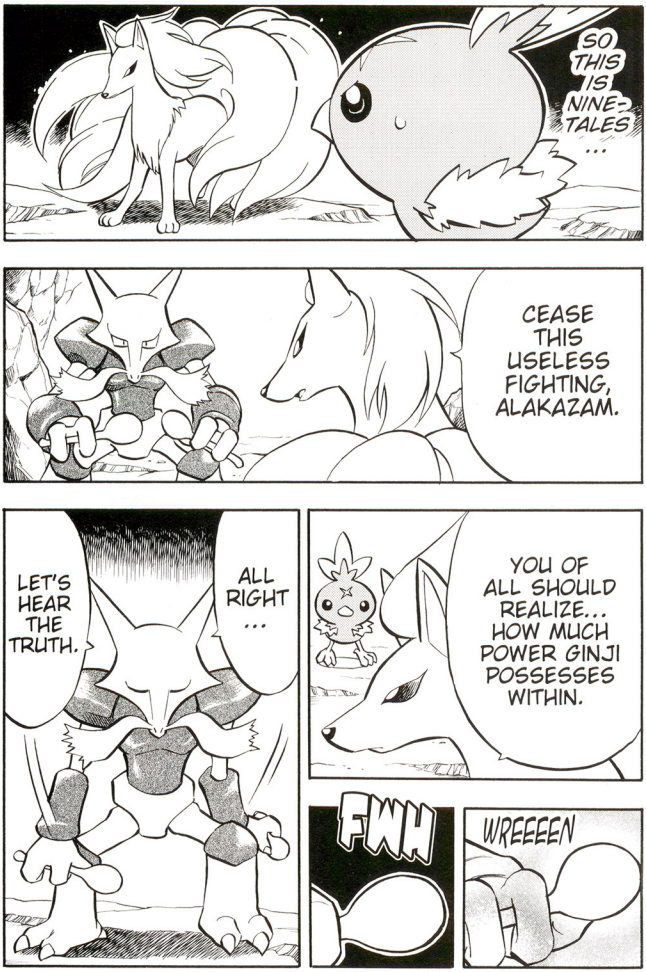

HOW-EVER!!
AH. VERY UNEX-PECTED.

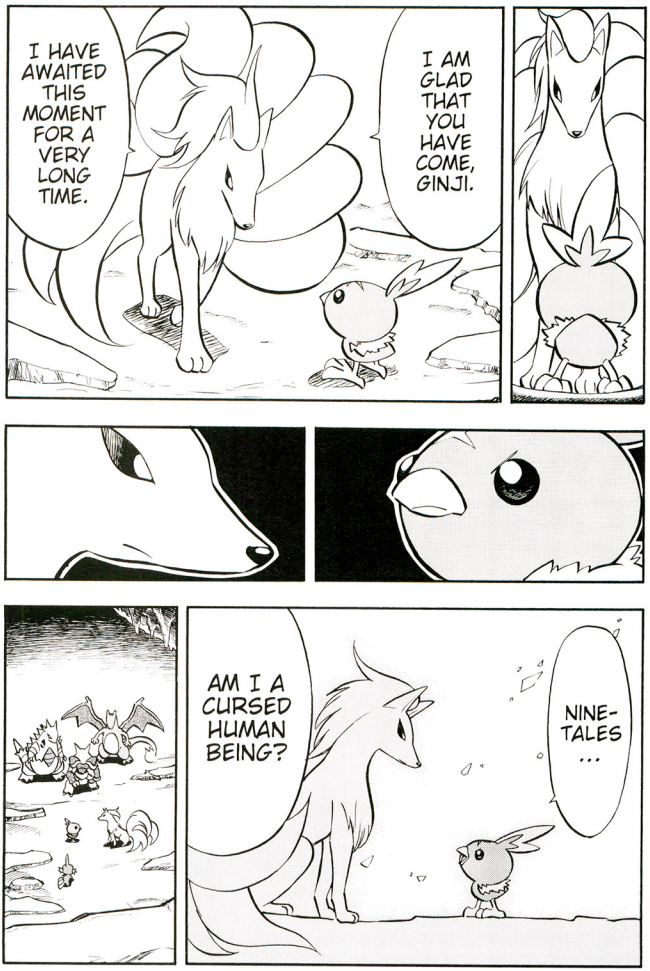

OUR COMBO!
HOW DO YOU LIKE THAT, HUH?!


?!
YOU CAN'T DEFEAT US THAT EASILY.
THEY'RE GOLD RANK ALL RIGHT.
YUP.
HMPH!

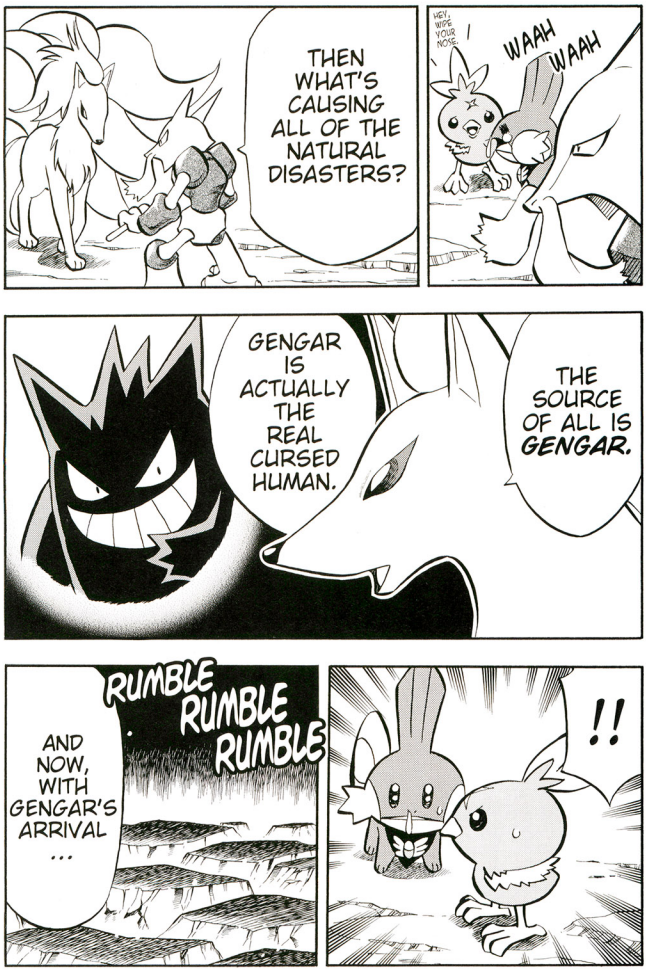

THEN WE'LL JUST STRIKE YOU DOWN NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES IT TAKES!
JUMP
STOP!!

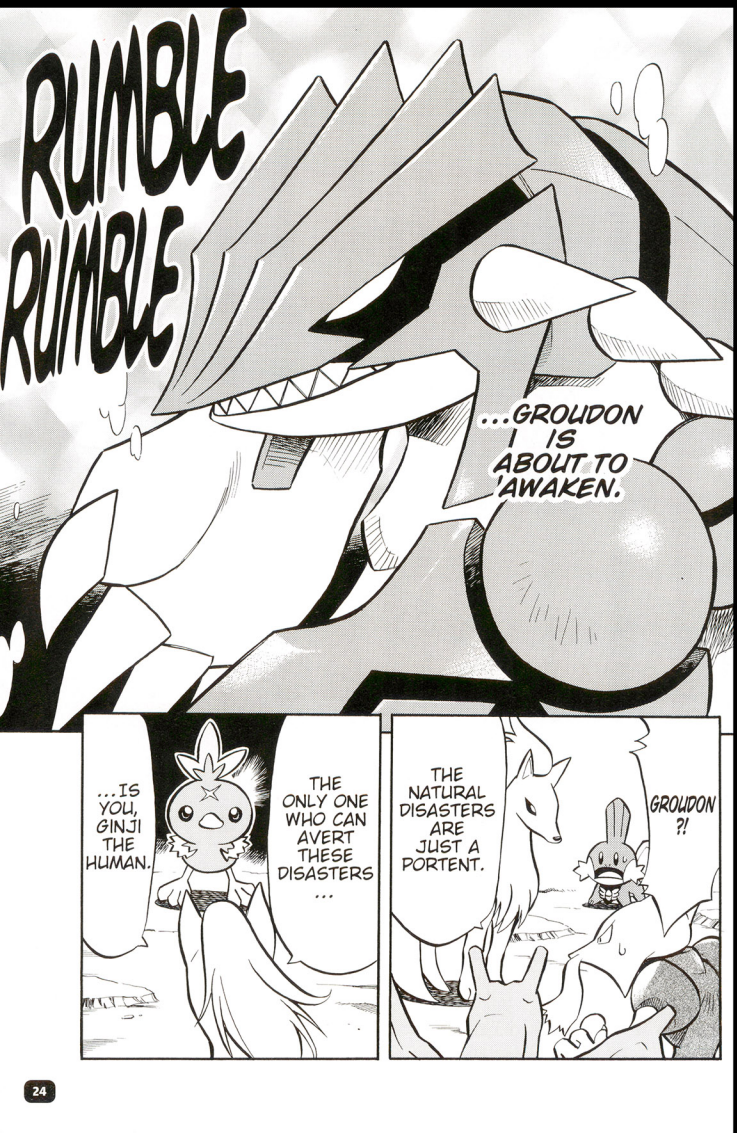

NINE-TALES!
FWAH


SO THIS IS NINE-TALES ...
CEASE THIS USELESS FIGHTING, ALAKAZAM.
ALL RIGHT ...
LET'S HEAR THE TRUTH.
YOU OF ALL SHOULD REALIZE... HOW MUCH POWER GINJI POSSESSES WITHIN.
FWH
WREEEEN

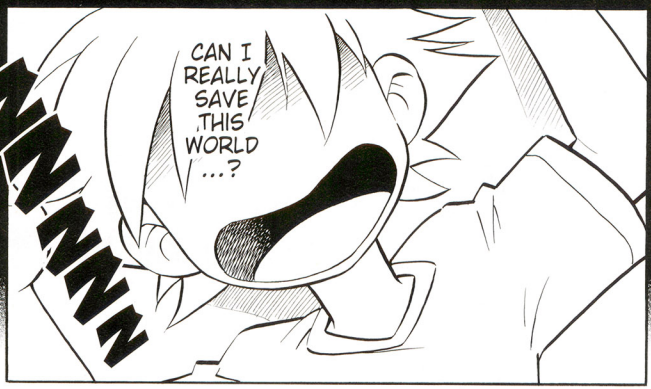

I HAVE AWAITED THIS MOMENT FOR A VERY LONG TIME.
I AM GLAD THAT YOU HAVE COME, GINJI.
AM I A CURSED HUMAN BEING?
NINE-TALES ...

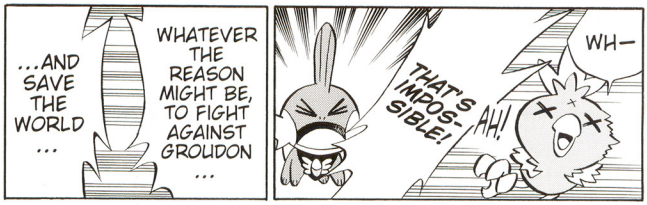
YOU ARE NOT ...
...A "CURSED" HUMAN BEING !!
SOB
SNIFFLE
I'M SO GLAD !
THIS IS GREAT, GINJI !!
WHEW

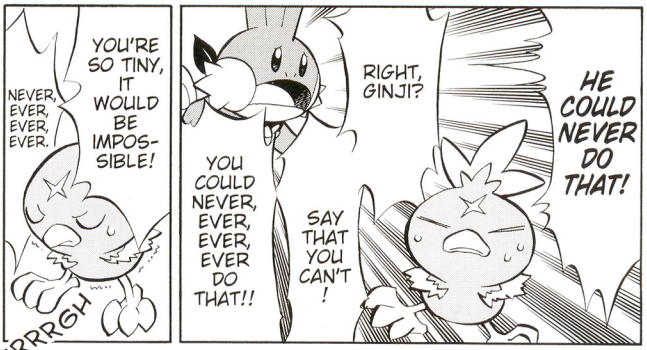

THEN WHAT'S CAUSING ALL OF THE NATURAL DISASTERS?
HEY, WIPE YOUR NOSE.
WAAH WAAH
THE SOURCE OF ALL IS GENGAR.
GENGAR IS ACTUALLY THE REAL CURSED HUMAN.
AND NOW, WITH GENGAR'S ARRIVAL ...
RUMBLE RUMBLE RUMBLE
!!


RUMBLE
RUMBLE
...GROUDON IS ABOUT TO 'AWAKEN.
...IS YOU, GINJI THE HUMAN.
THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN AVERT THESE DISASTERS ...
THE NATURAL DISASTERS ARE JUST A PORTENT.
GROUDON ?!

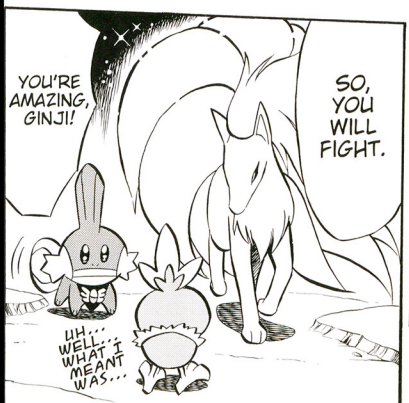
ME... SAVE THIS WORLD?
Test results
Math
GINJI
32
100
TREMBLE TREMBLE
English
GINJI
24
100
48
ME ...?
I'VE LIVED A NORMAL LIFE UP TILL NOW.
SEE YA LATER.
BYE.

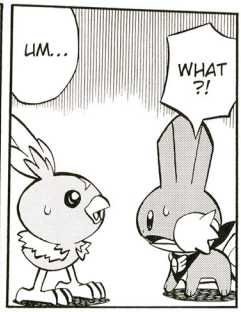

NNNN
CAN I REALLY SAVE THIS WORLD ...?

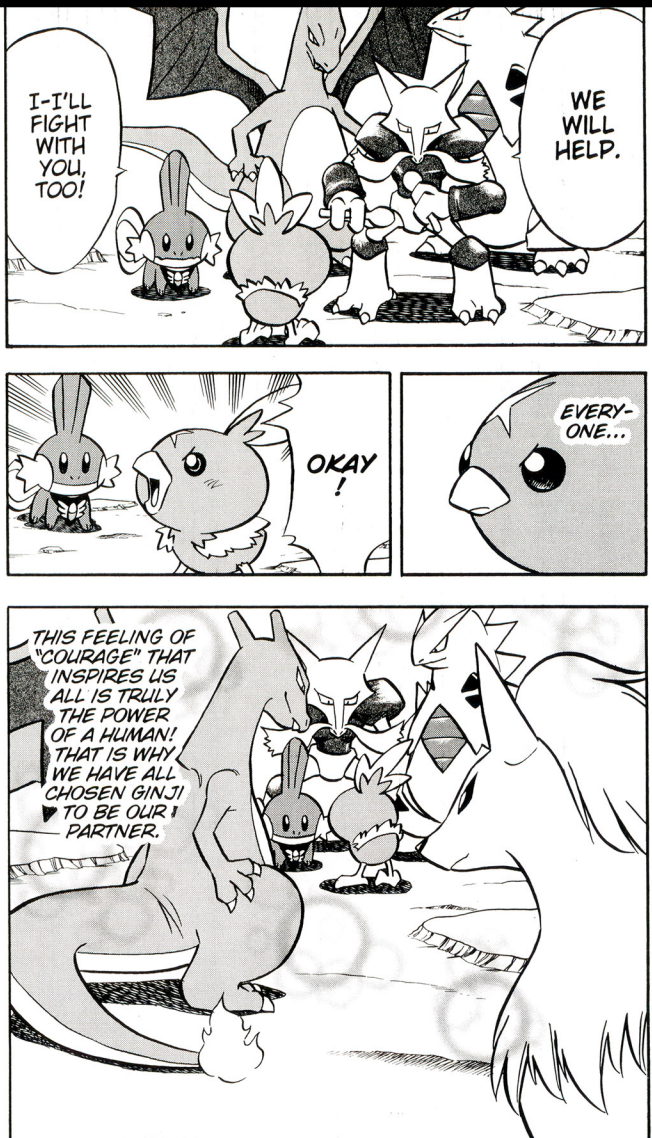

...AND SAVE THE WORLD ...
WHATEVER THE REASON MIGHT BE, TO FIGHT AGAINST GROUDON ...
WH—
AH!
THAT'S IMPOS-SIBLE!

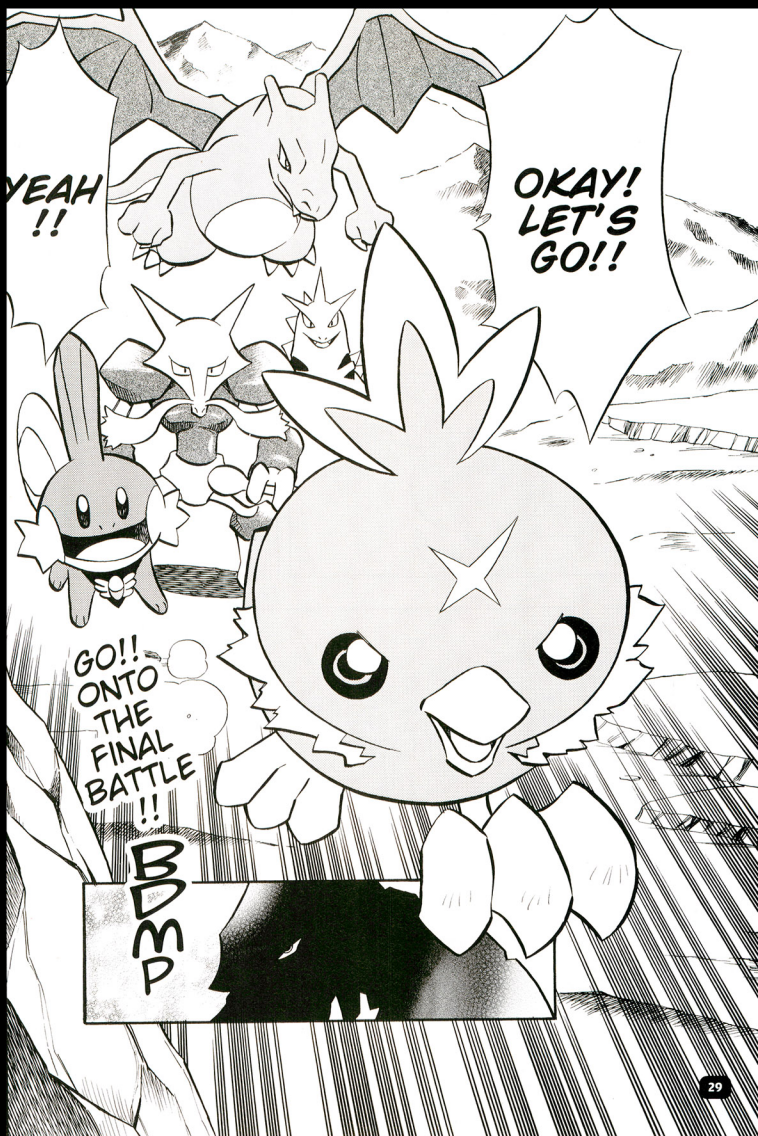

NEVER, EVER, EVER, EVER.
YOU'RE SO TINY, IT WOULD BE IMPOS-SIBLE!
HRRRGH
YOU COULD NEVER, EVER, EVER, EVER DO THAT!!
SAY THAT YOU CAN'T!
RIGHT, GINJI?
HE COULD NEVER DO THAT!

MPPPGAH
WE WON'T KNOW ...
...UNTIL WE TRY!!


YOU'RE AMAZING, GINJI!
SO, YOU WILL FIGHT.
UH... WELL... WHAT I MEANT WAS...


UM...
WHAT ?!


I-I'LL FIGHT WITH YOU, TOO!
WE WILL HELP.
OKAY!
EVERY-ONE...
THIS FEELING OF "COURAGE" THAT INSPIRES US ALL IS TRULY THE POWER OF A HUMAN! THAT IS WHY WE HAVE ALL CHOSEN GINJ TO BE OUR PARTNER.


YEAH !!
OKAY! LET'S GO!!
GO!! ONTO THE FINAL BATTLE !!
BDMP

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POKéMON MYSTERY DUNGEON
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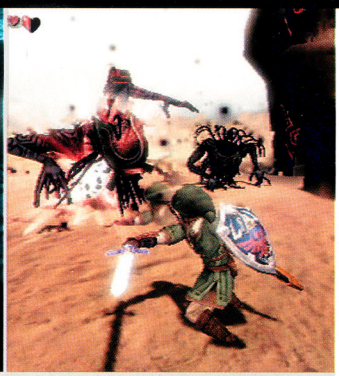
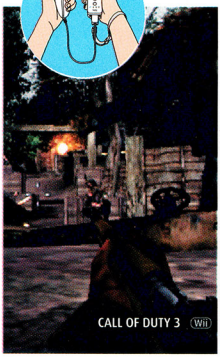
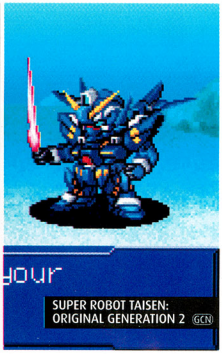






also masterfully designed. Every one introduces an interesting new twist, be it raising water levels in the Lakebed Temple, controlling a mighty statue in the Temple of Time, or (my personal favorite) walking on walls and ceilings in the Goron Mines. Even better than the dungeons themselves are the incredible bosses. I don't think any game in the Zelda series has had such consistently enjoyable boss fights; when you come across the likes of Armogohma (an arachnid addition to the Gohma family) or Argorok (an awesome dragon), you'll first be impressed by the beast's intimidating looks, then by the sheer fun of the actual battle.

Surprisingly, one of the few aspects of Twilight Princess I would change is one of its most unique features: Link's ability to transform into a wolf. Don't get me wrong—Link's feral form is a great gameplay device, especially in the later part of the game, when you can change forms at will. The issue I have is in the early goings, when you're forced to remain a wolf for extended periods and seek out creatures of darkness within a restricted region; since the wolf's abilities don't evolve much, the sections can drag, and easing players into wolf form and saving such sections for later in the game would have benefited the flow. Additionally, some of the game's music could have been improved. The remixed tunes are excellent (especially the Hyrule Castle theme), but some of the new tracks are too subtle for their own good. On the other hand, there's no need to worry about the lack of manual camera rotation in the Wii version of the game—it has no negative impact on the action.

Regardless of any tweaks that could have made Twilight Princess even better, the game is so much more than the sum of its parts. The lengthy development time has really paid off, leaving gamers with a supremely immersive world that begs to be explored, a truly dramatic story, and one of the most captivating characters in the Zelda mythos: Midna. Zelda fans should be thrilled by the evolution of the franchise (and its numerous nods to Ocarina of Time), and newcomers couldn't ask for a better jumping-off point. Twilight Princess is a legend no gamer should miss. —**Chris H.**

CALL OF DUTY 3

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **Activision**
DEVELOPER: **Treyarch**
ESRB: **Teen**

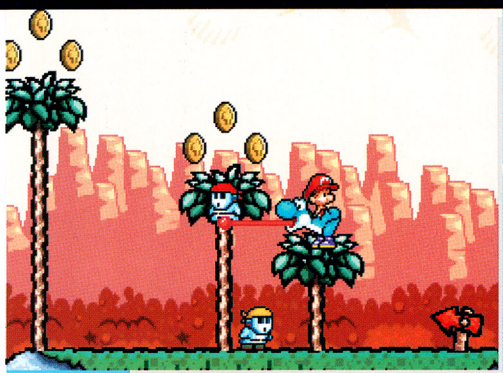
To bemoan the cliché of World War II first-person shooters is almost a cliché in itself at this point, but if publishers are going to keep pumping out these titles (especially at Activision's current pace of a new CoD every year), they need to do more to keep "the Big One" interesting. While Call of Duty 3 is certainly competent and the standard FPS controls benefit from the move to Wii, there's nothing else particularly special about the game to really set it apart from last year's edition. The new "battle actions," which use the controller to simulate such activities as rowing a boat and setting an explosive charge, are meant to further immerse you in the game, but they come off feeling forced and mechanical. Further marring the illusion of being on the battlefield is wildly inconsistent AI. One moment your fellow combatants will behave fairly convincingly, then the next you'll see two enemies kneel down about three feet apart and start blasting away at each other. The visuals are a similarly mixed bag; the massive environments boast some pretty impressive architectural complexity, but muddy textures and subpar lighting drag down the presentation. On the positive side, all of the weapons feel suitably meaty, the sheer amount of carnage happening around you is staggering at times, and the campaign unfolds intriguingly through different viewpoints that gradually converge. Plus, there is still some fun to be had just from mowing down Nazis. Whether that's enough depends on your level of war fatigue. —**Steve T.**

SUPER ROBOT TAISEN: ORIGINAL GENERATION 2

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **Game Boy Advance**
PUBLISHER: **Atlus**
DEVELOPER: **Banpresto**
ESRB: **Teen**

If you enjoyed the turn-based warfare of the first Super Robot Taisen, chances are you'll like the sequel even more. Part two doesn't take nearly as long to pick up steam as its slow-starting predecessor, it sports dramatically improved battle animations, and it offers a certain satisfying familiarity that comes from already being so well-acquainted with these characters. If you weren't a fan of the previous game, though, the relatively minor advancements probably won't be enough to convert you. Both titles play essentially the same, and many of the problems persist, including painfully long dialogue exchanges between missions, which tend to bog down the campaign. I'm usually not one to bemoan extensive storytelling, but this series is just way too chatty for its own good. And if you haven't played the first game, don't even think about jumping into this one—the story is so dense as to be impenetrable for Super Robot neophytes. This is a follow-up that caters to the devoted first and foremost. —**Steve T.**



BABY FORMULA

ISLAND HOPPING

YOSHI'S ISLAND DS

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: ARTOON
ESRB: EVERYONE

A new Yoshi platformer may not bear the same crushing weight of expectations that accompanies a Mario platformer, but it does carry the Super Mario World DNA in its genes—and fans of the franchise are legion. Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island for the Super NES (many readers may know it as the enhanced remake, Yoshi's Island: Super Mario Advance 3 for Game Boy Advance), was sublimely balanced: each new world promised something surprising and fun. It was one of the rare games you wish would go on forever, but 11 years have passed since dinosaur-hungry gamers got some fresh meat. Yoshi's Island DS is the first true sequel to that classic game and, like its eponymous star, it tends to stumble a bit before it finally sticks the landings. The new game has all the ingredients required for greatness—it's good-looking, meticulously designed and packed with many hours of challenge—but it still suffers by comparison to its SNES ancestor.

The DS game features the addition of four babies who supplement the formidable Baby Mario. Each infant has a special skill set that you'll need at various points in the adventure—Baby Peach and Baby DK join the party early and stay with the team through the entire adventure, and Baby Wario and Baby Bowser each show up for a handful of levels. When you need a different baby for a given task, you'll head to a Stork Stop, which works exactly like it sounds. You'll spend most of the time in any given level as a single character, but several levels make hay out of the Stork Stop feature by making you switch between babies multiple times to reach an objective. Less frequently, you'll need to return to earlier levels with a newly unlocked character to collect baby-specific coins (which appear as dotted outlines to all but the intended baby). Baby Mario's abilities are more or less unchanged from the original game, but special M Blocks that only he can use are now a part of the landscape. Baby Peach has only one real advantage over the other characters, but it's a doozy: she can soar on wind currents when she opens her parasol. The Peach-oriented levels are wide-open affairs that make excellent use of the vertical real estate provided by the DS's dual screens. Baby DK can, of course, swing and climb on vines, but he also has powerful attacks that allow you to pummel your way through enemy-heavy levels. Baby Wario carries a magnet that allows him to collect coins behind walls, and Baby Bowser can spit unlimited salvos of fireballs. Wario's coin-rich levels are particularly fun—you'll wish the guy stuck around a while longer.

Beyond the new babies, most of the design elements in the DS game are practically identical to those found in the original game, but the overall effect is less like a whimsical dinosaur playland and more like a rigorous dinosaur obstacle course. Yoshi's Island DS is surprisingly tough for a game featuring babies on multicolored dinosaurs. Been-there-done-that gamers will probably revel in World 5's level design—World 5-1's auto-scrolling Chomp love fest is inducing post-traumatic stress disorder as I write this—and a few of the Secret and Extra levels will crush all but the saltiest platforming veterans. The game also skitters into frustration country occasionally when challenges are more about trial and error than learned skill and recognition (play through any level involving spiked walls and you'll see what I mean). The odd exceptions are the bosses—they seem to be making guest appearances from a much easier Yoshi game. Most of them are easy to beat the first time you meet them. It's unusual to feel relaxed as you walk through a boss door, but you'll come to appreciate the sensation after you've exhausted several dozen lives on the unforgiving journey through jewel-encrusted caverns and candy-colored skies.
—DREW W.

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FUNIMATION ENTERTAINMENT

PlayStation 2

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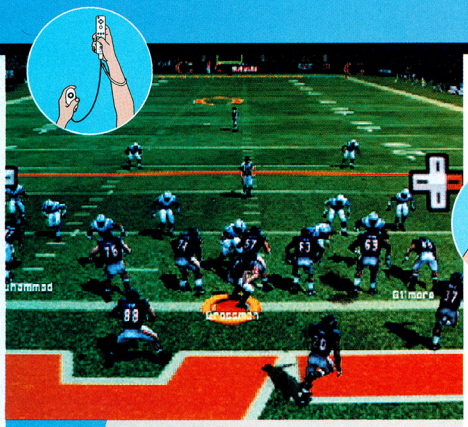
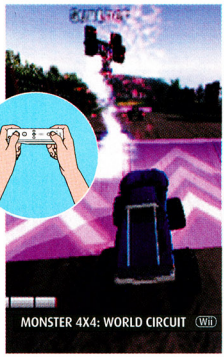




FAIR CATCH

PLAYER IN MOTION

MADDEN NFL 07

RATING: 8.5

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
DEVELOPER: EA Canada
ESRB: Everyone

No third-party Wii launch title has taken Nintendo's desire to expand the gaming audience more seriously than Madden NFL 07. Seven million Madden NFL fans are not enough for EA, apparently. The company wants to appeal to the tens of millions who tune in every Sunday for NFL broadcasts but don't play games on a regular basis. The effort is a qualified success. Motion-based control for many of the game's actions, simplified play-calling, and three multiplayer minigames target the casual gaming audience. But the core game is still geared to those with in-depth football knowledge and the reflexes required to pass to the open receiver when the pressure's on. The attempt to open the door for new players but keep Madden veterans from feeling shut out feels like a compromise. Still, the control scheme will work for both audiences. The nunchuk's Control Stick operates basic athlete movement while everything from snapping the ball to passing, catching, and calling for a fair catch is triggered through intuitive remote-and-nunchuk motion. The controller responsiveness is tuned perfectly. When you perform an action, the athletes under your control will do as you wish, even if you don't move exactly the same way every time. That said, some motions, such as stiff-arms and jukes, are about as difficult to pull off as they would be in real life. Also, the developers attempted to simplify play-calling by sorting plays by type (medium pass, inside run, etc.) rather than by formation as the default option; this makes the first play-calling step accessible, but the next step still assumes that you know football terms such as "bootleg" and "flares." Newbies will probably stick to using the Ask Madden feature. Most modes are identical to those of other console versions, including the in-depth Franchise mode and the improved-for-07 NFL Superstar mode. On top of that, the three Wii-exclusive multiplayer minigames are standouts that are much more robust than their "minigame" moniker indicates. The 2 on 2 game, which boils the pass-and-catch playground game to its very essence, and the Kicking Combine game, which allows non-kicking participants to influence the wind, are especially satisfying. Some casual gamers may balk at Madden NFL 07's overall complexity, but it won't make any enemies of Madden fans, and the minigames will be the life of the football party. —George S.

MONSTER 4X4: WORLD CIRCUIT

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Barcelona
ESRB: Everyone

Put away your pitchforks and torches—this monster is here just to play. And Monster 4x4 plays nicely as long as you don't expect too much challenge from Ubisoft's arcade-inspired ride. The racer scores big points in my book for including a steering-wheel shell for the Wii remote and using its motion-sensing capability to control stunts. You'll feel totally in control in spite of the many bumps. The biggest hurdle to enjoyment is the game's carbon-copy track design. Icy patches in Alaska have the same impact on the race as oil slicks at Mount Rushmore. Encountering the same jumps, items, hazards, and remedial NPC opponents track after track soon leads to yawns. For greater challenge and more variety, add friends to the mix. In addition to racing, up to four players can compete in chaotic minigames like Combat, Football, and Vehicle Ball. —Scott P.

MARVEL: ULTIMATE ALLIANCE

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: Activision
DEVELOPER: Raven Software / Vicarious Visions
ESRB: Teen

Expanding the team-up-and-conquer button-mashing formula of Raven Software's X-Men Legends titles to include characters from the entire Marvel Comics universe, Marvel: Ultimate Alliance is a comic fan's dream. Not only can you control 25 of the company's most popular heroes (in four-character teams), but you fight and befriend dozens more over the game's five long chapters. If you know your Marvel Comics teams, you can create established squads from the pool—all of the Fantastic Four, for example, or members of the Avengers and X-Men—to receive team upgrades. You can also establish your own team after the first few missions and build its stats by keeping the group intact. Developing a new team, complete with its own name and symbol, is pretty satisfying. Also satisfying are the countless battles with Marvel villains. Motion control lets you instruct your heroes to pull off a variety of attacks by swiping and thrusting the Wii remote. Given that motion-controlled attacks take more time to pull off than a simple push of a button does, you may find yourself using the A Button instead to trigger standard attacks—its a long game, and gesturing throughout would be tedious. Since the game is designed to let you guide a wide variety of heroes though the adventure, none of the controls are character-specific, unfortunately, which means that controlling Wolverine is about the same experience as controlling Ms. Marvel or Captain America. Perhaps the game's best use of motion control is the ability it gives you to rotate the camera by tilting the nunchuk. Nunchuk motion also figures in when a character must push or pull heavy objects—you shake the controller to give the character extra strength—and in some boss battles. Great production values (including a terrific mood-setting soundtrack) and a host of concept art and comic-book unlockables help tie everything together to make for a top-notch superhero action-RPG. —George S.

GET A JOB!

WORTH THE WAIT

FINAL FANTASY III

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: SQUARE ENIX
DEVELOPER: SQUARE ENIX
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

In the cartridge era of the FINAL FANTASY series, it wasn't unusual for the US market to be ignored—of the first six games in the series, only I, IV, and VI were given a timely US release. But while FINAL FANTASY II and V have been repeatedly remade and released on other platforms, FINAL FANTASY III hasn't seen the light of day since. It took 16 years and the might of the Nintendo DS to finally revive this long-lost gem.

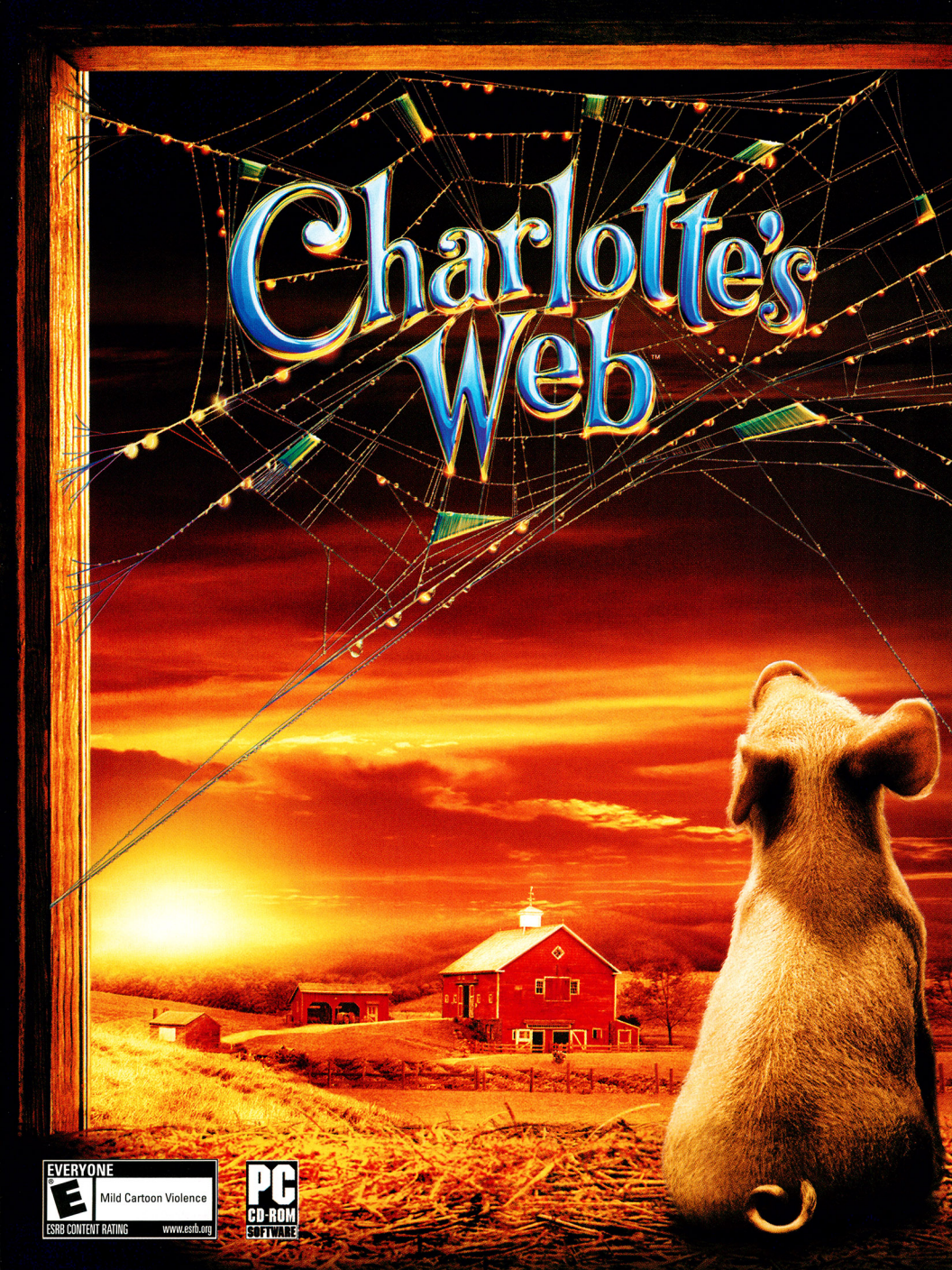
After that kind of wait, the developers were clearly determined not to do a half-hearted job. Instead of a touch-up, they've gone for a complete graphical overhaul, re-creating the world and characters in stunning 3D. The smooth models and detailed textures are a league above anything we've yet seen on the DS; they look nearly as good as FINAL FANTASY: Crystal Chronicles on the GameCube. But while the graphics are new and flashy, the art style is decidedly old-school. FINAL FANTASY III marks a return to the noseless, bobble-headed characters of yore, and they look cuter than ever now that they've been skillfully animated in 3-D. The environments are no less impressive, and the artists have given every area a distinct look and flavor instead of reusing common sets of dungeon textures. In case that isn't enough to win you over, the game opens with a stunning CG intro that spans both screens of the DS. All of this visual beauty is perfectly matched by a remixed score from famed FINAL FANTASY composer Nobuo Uematsu. Mr. Uematsu rarely works on the series nowadays, so it's a treat to hear a lost soundtrack from the prime of his career.

FINAL FANTASY III introduced many beloved concepts to the series, including Moogles and summon spells, but none had more of an impact than the job system. Each of the four characters in your party can be assigned one of 23 jobs, from Monk to Black Mage to Dragoon, which affects their stats, their combat abilities, and the gear they can equip. The job system was the most popular character-development system ever to appear in the series, and has been reused in a half dozen FINAL FANTASY games since. Unfortunately, this first incarnation seems primitive and shallow compared with the job systems in later titles. Unlike FINAL FANTASY V and FINAL FANTASY Tactics, FFIII doesn't allow characters to learn skills permanently by leveling up their jobs, so there's less of an incentive to switch jobs and absolutely no reason to use weaker jobs like Scholar. Well, except to see how your characters look wearing spectacles and a tweed coat. (Answer: Adorable!)

The simplified version of the job system isn't the only aspect that seems out-of-date. By modern standards the story is simple and trite, and the four heroes have only the faintest of personalities. The job balance is weird (Thieves do more damage than Fighters!?), and many spells and abilities seem useless. Worst of all, the game can be absolutely infuriating at times; you'll often breeze through dungeons only to be slaughtered by the boss and forced to replay large chunks of the game. The inability to recover from a losing battle is particularly frustrating—if you use a Phoenix Down to revive a fallen character, the revived character will nearly always be killed again on the same turn. And Phoenix Down can never be purchased, so if you use too much of the limited supply early in the game, you'll be out of luck later on.

Although these flaws would be hard to forgive in a modern game, they're exactly what you'd expect to find in a game made 16 years ago. That was an era in which RPGs were aimed at hardcore gamers instead of casual audiences, and developers were more interested in thrilling players with escalating threats than in telling a story. Square Enix may have transformed FINAL FANTASY III into a thing of beauty, but they haven't polished out its bumps and quirks to make it appeal to modern tastes. This may frustrate FINAL FANTASY fans who grew up on the more-recent games in the series, but it will delight players who miss the straightforward quests and high challenge level of NES-era RPGs.

—CASEY L.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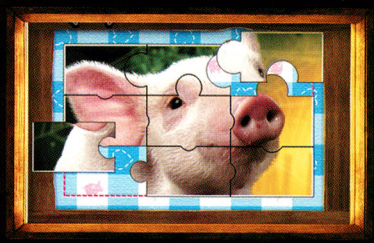
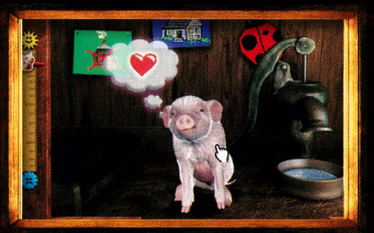


Get Tangled Up in the Fun!



It's easy to get caught up in the adventure of this engaging video game! Based on the *Charlotte's Web* movie, you can play as Wilbur or Templeton as you solve challenges and meet other familiar characters along the way. It's an exciting journey filled with fun and discovery through 16 levels of romping, stomping, kick-up-your-heels fun!

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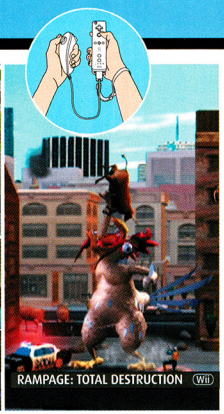


GT PRO SERIES

RATING: 5.0

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: MTO
ESRB: EVERYONE

The free steering wheel attachment that comes with GT Pro Series is pretty cool. The construction is surprisingly solid, and once you get the hang of it, steering with the attachment feels great—it's a significant improvement over using just the remote. Unfortunately, the game itself isn't very good. A port of a 2003 GCN title that was released only in Japan, it's a bare-bones racer with incredibly dated visuals (it looks more like a 2001 GCN title), a paltry number of uninspired tracks, and a Championship mode that has an annoying tendency to force you behind the wheel of a different car almost every race. Driving with the Wii remote and steering-wheel attachment is inherently fun, but GT Pro Series taps the bare minimum of the setup's potential. —STEVE T.

NEED FOR SPEED: CARBON

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: NINTENDO GAMECUBE
PUBLISHER: EA
DEVELOPER: EA CANADA
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

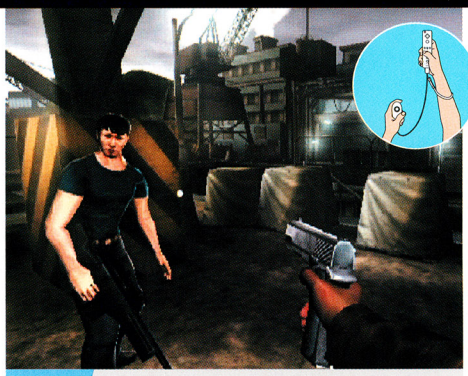
You may think the *Fast and the Furious* scene is on its way out, but Need for Speed: Carbon assures you it's still fueling up. You begin the game as a hotshot racer who's been away from the scene for a while. Old acquaintances would like to have you back on their team, but only if you still have what it takes to tear up the asphalt. Fitted with a brand-new ride (tuner, exotic, or muscle—your choice) you take to the city, completing races and competitions to win back sections of the city for your gang. You now have a wingman racer (activated by the Y Button) who can help you perform midrace tricks such as scouting, blocking, or drafting, which adds a very interesting dynamic to standard races. On the downside, the frame rate could have used a little more time in the shop, but it never detracts from the overall sense of speed. —PETE M.

RAMPAGE: TOTAL DESTRUCTION

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: MIDWAY
DEVELOPER: PIPEWORKS
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

Bigger doesn't necessarily mean better. Not that there's anything wrong with the mindless fun provided by Rampage: Total Destruction—it's just that even with 10 new playable monsters and the addition of Dallas as an eighth destructible city, the Wii version of the game feels essentially the same as the GCN edition that was released earlier this year. The Wii controls don't add a lot either. Though you're now swiping with the remote to grab and spin, and swinging it downward to slam the ground, the gameplay remains fundamentally unchanged, right down to the occasionally unresponsive movement and sometimes-questionable collision detection. If you're a Wii-owning fan of Rampage's lighthearted destructive tendencies, however, and you missed out the GCN version, you'll get a kick out of Total Destruction. —CHRIS H.



ALL RED

QUITE A STEEL

RED STEEL

RATING: 8.0

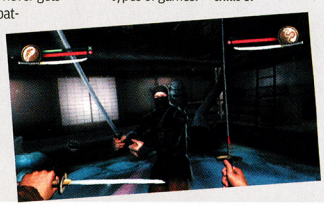
PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT PARIS
ESRB: TEEN

It's been a long road for Red Steel—during its development there was a lot of promise, and a lot of promises made. In the end, Red Steel delivers mostly as pledged, and that's a lot better than gamers following its progress were expecting. You play as an American man racing through the seedy underbelly of modern Tokyo, trying to chase down the Yakuza kingpins who kidnapped your mob-connected girlfriend and her father, and you confront gun-toting thugs every step of the way.

The game has a shooting-gallery feel—instead of constantly running and shooting, you spend most of your time popping up from behind cover to take out a few gangsters at a time. Thanks to smart pacing and excellent level design, the fighting never gets tiresome. The gun battles are punctuated by much-ballyhooed swordfights, one of the features that have received the most scrutiny. You swing the Wii remote as your primary blade, and the nunchuk as a defensive dagger. Using a combination of parries and dodges, you wear down your opponent's will to fight. When he finally succumbs, you have the choice to kill him or to spare his life, and your decision has various effects on the game. While it's not the one-to-one swashbuckling that some gamers would like to see, it's a great deal of fun and challenge.

For the most part, the game looks splendid—small scenery details accentuate the Japanese feel of virtually every place you go, and the destructible environments add intensity to the fighting. The plot is smart and features plenty of twists, but the voice work is pretty stiff and the cinematics are mostly chintzy still-image montages.

Not only is there a lot of game to enjoy in Red Steel; it's a great jumping-off point for Wii development. Hopefully other developers will take cues from this standard-bearing FPS, and hard-core gamers will understand that the Wii is a versatile platform for all types of games. —CHRIS S.



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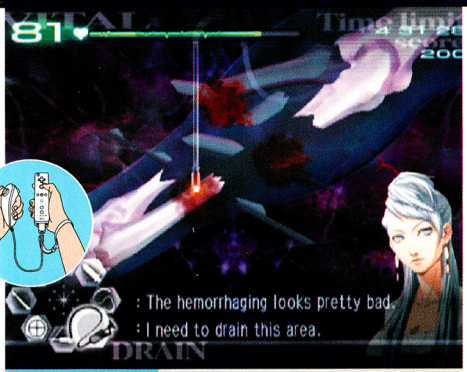
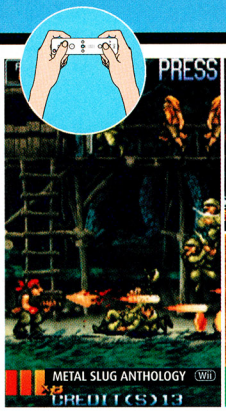
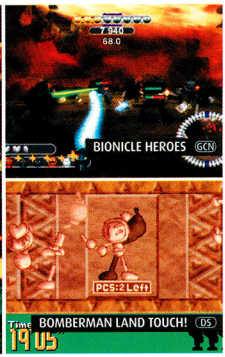






MEDICALLY CHECKED

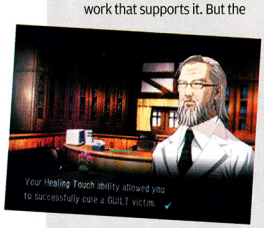
A CUT ABOVE

TRAUMA CENTER: SECOND OPINION

RATING: 8.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **Atlus**
DEVELOPER: **Atlus**
ESRB: **Teen**

Trauma Center: Under the Knife may not be the most recognized DS title, but for some it was the game that best sold the concept of touch control. Trauma Center: Second Opinion continues this trend with clever use of the Wii remote, and even though it's technically a remake as it follows the same story as the original, it stands out as a top Wii launch title, whether you've played the DS game or not. Like the original, Second Opinion follows the saga of Dr. Derek Stiles as he learns the ropes and strives to become a master surgeon. Though this may sound like a boring premise for a game, it's actually pulled off very well, mostly due to the tongue-in-cheek dialogue and the stylish artwork that supports it. But the real fun takes place in the operating room, where every surgical procedure you're asked to perform is more unbelievable than the next. The operations play out like puzzles. With your assistant by your side to give you hints, you are the doctor and you must figure out how to operate on the patient: where to cut, what medicine to inject, what organ to extract. To control the game's surgeries, you must switch tools using the nunchuk attachment; the Wii remote represents your scalpel, forceps, anesthetic needle, or whatever tool the situation calls for. Fans of the DS game will notice that many of the procedures have been altered to make better use of the remote. Also, Atlus has added an entirely new side quest involving a female German surgeon on the run, whose surgical procedures are often even more ludicrous than Dr. Stiles'. Operating with the remote is really a lot of fun, and shows off just how precise the controller can be. At times the motion control may feel awkward, especially during procedures in which you have to move the remote toward and away from the screen—but these moments are rare, and usually pass quickly. After playing Trauma Center on Wii, it's hard to imagine it was ever meant to be played any other way. The game is long, challenging, and arguably the most fun you'll have on Wii at launch. —**Andy M.**



METAL SLUG ANTHOLOGY

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **SNK Playmore USA**
DEVELOPER: **SNK/Terminal Reality**
ESRB: **Teen**

Fans of classic, side-scrolling, 2-D action will love Metal Slug Anthology. Ultra-challenging pattern-based shooters with intricately detailed animation are rare these days, so getting seven full games in one package is a hardcore gamer's dream come true. With the exception of minor load times, the games are essentially perfect ports of the NeoGeo originals, and the developers have included plenty of unlockable goodies. The game also features a nice selection of controller options, including some outrageous motion-sensitive configurations and the ability to use a GameCube controller; too bad you have to use the Control Stick if you go the GCN route. An infinite continue option hurts the replay value a little, but you'll have to practice a lot before you can call yourself a master. —**Chris H.**

BIONICLE HEROES

RATING: 5.0

PLATFORM: **Nintendo GameCube**
PUBLISHER: **Eidos**
DEVELOPER: **Traveller's Tales**
ESRB: **Everyone 10+**

After the successes of the two LEGO Star Wars releases, it seemed that Traveller's Tales had finally put LEGO-licensed games on the right track. Ironically, their good fortune has taken a detour with Bionicle Heroes, a title based on a product made by LEGO itself. To its credit, Bionicle Heroes looks pretty darn good—clean textures and effective lighting do a lot to overcome rather conventional level design. Unfortunately, virtually everything else about the game has issues: the story is virtually nonexistent, the action is repetitive and boring, and the puzzle elements are condescendingly simple. But the most egregious problem with Bionicle Heroes is that it doesn't feel very LEGO-ish; block-building aspects seldom come into play, and the scenery is only rarely reminiscent of LEGO pieces. It's a shame—a toy company with such a great history and legacy should be able to put together a better experience than this. —**Chris S.**

BOMBERMAN LAND TOUCH!

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **Nintendo DS**
PUBLISHER: **Atlus**
DEVELOPER: **Hudson**
ESRB: **Everyone**

It seems that you can't turn on a DS without being bombarded by touch-screen minigames, but with Bomberman Land Touch!, the folks at Hudson have built the minigame concept into a solid, cohesive unit. The game's adventure mode is about more than just playing 36 wildly different activities that range from racing to bowling to matching tiles; it's also about exploring the theme park's five lands, acquiring new outfits and bombs, and gaining access to new areas in RPG-like fashion. Admittedly, none of the minigames are as enjoyable as the ones in, say, a WarioWare title, but the game offers a fresh take on a familiar concept. The inclusion of traditional 2-D Bomberman is also nice, but if you already have Bomberman DS, there's almost nothing new here. —**Chris H.**

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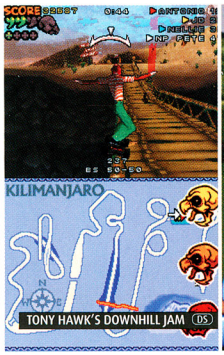
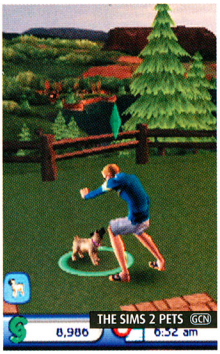




TONY HAWK'S DOWNHILL JAM

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: Nintendo DS
PUBLISHER: Activision
DEVELOPER: Vicarious Visions
ESRB: Everyone

Downhill Jam tries to breathe new life into Tony's skating series, and it does it successfully—for the most part. Spiritually, Downhill Jam feels like a snowboarding game. You can shred down the hill, kickflip to varial off of a giant kicker, then land it by doing a 50-50 grind down on a rail 200 feet away, and somehow this all feels even more awesome than your typical Hawk game. If you play through the standard storyline you'll be faced with multiple challenges à la old Hawk, but with new twists—such as racing three skaters down the hill, or grinding 3,000 feet of pipe in under a minute. You're given a boost button that you keep track of via an onscreen meter. This adds a bit of variety to the game, since you must perform tricks to keep the meter full. What makes this game work so well is that the developers didn't modify the existing core elements of the classic series—they just added onto them. For some, however, they may not have gone far enough—since deep down it's still basically the same old Hawk. Plus, this version is sorely lacking the ability to just dink around in the park (one of my favorite real-world skating activities.) The game does feature an array of online modes (including voice chat) and a full soundtrack of "real" music from a nice range of artists. If you haven't played a Tony Hawk game in a while, this is a decent edition to snatch up. —Pete M.

THE SIMS 2 PETS

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: Nintendo GameCube
PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
DEVELOPER: Maxis
ESRB: Teen

Much more open-ended than last year's Sims 2 release for the GCN, The Sims 2 Pets ditches the previous title's story mode in favor of pure relationship building between your sims and their four-legged friends. It's more like real life than ever (to a fault), with a focus on domestic activities (the Romance aspiration has been replaced with a Family aspiration) and pet ownership, with the occasional trip to the town center for shopping and socializing. When other Sims titles already offer both free play and more-directed, event-driven gaming, the question is if training and pampering customizable pets (from 55 dog breeds and 21 cat breeds) adds enough to justify its own game. It's like Nintendogs, one step removed, where you control the pet owner instead of being the pet owner. On the plus side, the human models are better-looking than those of previous titles, and the pets look and behave like real dogs and cats. Also, shopping in the town center is a fairly involving activity. There are many items to choose from at the beginning of the game, and the list increases as you play. Like all Sims games, this one has a lot of stuff that you can acquire. The game's customization features allow you to build a pretty good approximation of your own family, pets, and home (using the time-consuming but deep home-building tools). The question is, would you rather simulate real life or just live it? —George S.

OFF-ROAD RAGE

A BIG OL' TRUCK

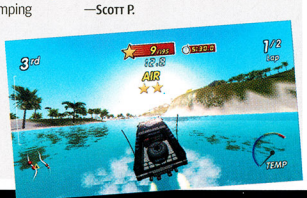
EXCITE TRUCK

RATING: 8.5

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: Nintendo
DEVELOPER: Monster Games
ESRB: Everyone

Excite Truck is the first Wii game that you need to sit still while playing to appreciate. That's because you'll need all your concentration focused on the ever-changing tracks and the competing trucks if you hope to win. I tried playing it standing up and almost fell over. My balance issues aside, Excite Truck delivers a fresh racing experience that emphasizes strategy over speed. Victory depends almost entirely on your ability to collect stars. Winning a race gets you 50 stars, but if you need 100 or 150 stars to satisfy the conditions to open the next cup, simply coming in first won't get you far. Instead, you need to take risks—stay back in the pack and bump fenders with competing four-wheelers or attack them by triggering one of the game's many terra-forming events that violently reshape the track ahead. Grabbing big air, dodging trees, jumping through rings, drifting around corners, and even crashing spectacularly will earn you stars. The main event is the five-cup Excite Race mode, featuring off-road courses from around the world: Fiji's volcanic islands, Finland's icy coast, the rocky Scottish highlands, Canada's northern woods, a Mexican desert, and scenic China, plus some unlockable surprises. You'll also unlock trophies and new trucks as you reach benchmarks. The vehicles look tough, and they handle well using the Wii remote held sideways in both hands, but in spite of having a range of attributes, many of the trucks feel interchangeable.

Excite Truck gives a nod to its namesake ExciteBike (for NES) via a turbo feature that overheats your engine with constant use, and a bonus boost for landing squarely on all four wheels. This last maneuver is handled niftily by rotating the Wii remote backward to bring the front wheels up, and forward to bring the front wheels down. Challenge mode presents slalomlike and other goal-oriented races, and replay value is enhanced with the two-player, head-to-head Versus mode. I would have loved to experience a wider variety of settings, but with a solid Wii control scheme and fun, tactical races, I'm truly excited. —Scott P.



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CAUTION: This is not a science. Parental receptivity to the above strategies is dependent upon a large number of completely bizarre variables. For best results, keep fingers crossed when not playing video games.

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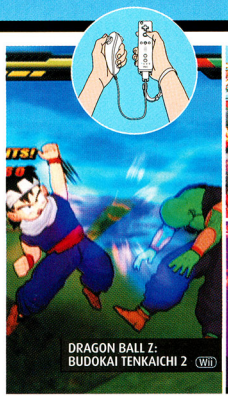

BARRELS OF FUN

MONKEY LOVE

SUPER MONKEY BALL: BANANA BLITZ

RATING: 8.5

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: Sega
DEVELOPER: Sega
ESRB: Everyone

Let's just pretend that Super Monkey Ball Adventure never happened. With Sega's Cinnabon-eared primates back in the hands of Toshihiro Nagoshi and his team (the folks responsible for the original Super Monkey Ball and its sequel), Banana Blitz triumphantly returns the series to its arcade-style hijinks. In fact, this may be the best installment in the franchise to date. For starters, the classic Monkey Ball formula works wonderfully with the Wii remote. I'm not sure the controls are more precise than using an analog stick, but manipulating the game board by tilting the remote makes for a tenser, more visceral experience. There's something very satisfying about speeding down a straightaway, making a big jump, then actually yanking back on the controller to stop your monkey from flying off the edge. It just *feels* right.

The single-player mode consists of about 100 never-before-seen puzzle boards, most of which are pretty inspired. The ability to jump brings an entirely new dynamic to the game, and really opens up the level design. Nearly every board manages to throw something different at you, which keeps things fresh (and incredibly addictive) to the very end. Series vets concerned that being able to hop over obstacles will make the game too easy needn't worry. The stages are designed to compensate for your new ability, and as a result Banana Blitz is every bit as challenging as its predecessors (only the hardest of the hard-core will ever reach some of those optional bananas). Boss battles are another great addition, and they expand the Monkey Ball concept in some neat ways. The highlight is an encounter with an enormous T. rex reminiscent of (strangely enough) the battles in Shadow of the Colossus—you have to traverse the beast's massive frame, which is like a stage unto itself, to reach the weak point atop its cranium.

While the single-player game alone is worth the price of admission, Banana Blitz also offers 50 multiplayer party games. The variety is astounding—everything from old favorites like Monkey Target (but with a new twist) to a full-fledged game of darts. A few of the selections fall flat, but enough succeed to keep you and your fellow Monkey Ballers entertained for days. All in all, Banana Blitz is an amazingly robust package and a fantastic showcase for the hardware. —**Steve T.**

DRAGON BALL Z: BUDOKAI TENKAICHI 2

RATING: 9.0 (Dragon Ball Z fans)
6.0 (everybody else)

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: Atari
DEVELOPER: Spike
ESRB: Teen

Your interest in Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi 2 will depend almost entirely on your interest in the Dragon Ball Z anime or manga—so let's assume that you're a hard-core Vegetamaniac. Budokai is a marginally prettier update of previous DBZ fighting game efforts with one earth-shaking difference that will make fans of the show go Super Saiyan 3 with delight: you can actually execute attacks with hand movements like the characters in the anime. After you wave the Wii remote and nunchuk to unleash Goku's Spirit Bomb attack, I guarantee you won't want to go back to hitting a simple button combination. Given the variety of characters at your disposal, mastering the elaborate control scheme will take some work. You'll appreciate your protracted stay in Ultimate Training mode when you're blasting baddies like Frieza through buttes and houses in Dragon Adventure mode. —**Drew W.**

CHARLOTTE'S WEB

RATING: 6.0

PLATFORM: Nintendo DS
PUBLISHER: Sega
DEVELOPER: Backbone Entertainment
ESRB: Everyone

Unlike the usual crop of movie-to-game adaptations, Charlotte's Web for DS does a good job of holding its own. It does so by putting a strong emphasis on exploration rather than combat, letting you guide Wilbur the pig or Templeton the rat through four fairly large side-scrolling environments to collect items and uncover secrets. The vibe in Charlotte's Web is surprisingly reminiscent of Ecco the Dolphin, with its natural backdrops and realistic character animations. Unfortunately, Charlotte's Web is very short and offers little challenge throughout the 16 brief stages of its Adventure mode. The various minigames add some breadth to the experience, but as a whole Charlotte's Web feels somewhat incomplete. Still, it's a worthwhile effort that fans of the book or the movie can enjoy, however short it may be. —**Andy M.**

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG GENESIS

RATING: 6.0

PLATFORM: Game Boy Advance
PUBLISHER: Sega
DEVELOPER: Sonic Team
ESRB: Everyone

Sega already proved with the Sonic Advance titles that the GBA has Blast Processing, so why is the port of Sonic the Hedgehog's inaugural adventure riddled with slowdown? For that matter, what's with the wonky sound effects, mildly slippery controls, and occasional graphical weirdness? Anyone hoping for a perfect duplicate of the 16-bit classic is going to be disappointed with the GBA version, but beneath the sloppy port job is a legendary platformer that looks great and features excellent level design. Considering that Sonic Mega Collection for GCN boasts a perfect version of the original Sonic, this game is a bit of a tough sell, but at least the inclusion of the 'hog's trademark Spin Dash adds some appeal. —**Chris H.**

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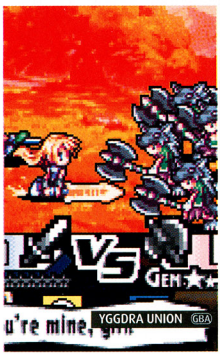

PICTURE THIS

WHIP-CRACKIN'

YGGDRA UNION

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: GAME BOY ADVANCE
PUBLISHER: ATLUS
DEVELOPER: STING
ESRB: TEEN

Atlus—a company known for its quirky RPGs and strategy games—brings us yet another oddity in the form of Yggdra Union. Fans of the Fire Emblem series will recognize the game's basic structure, in which you move troops like chess pieces across a map, striking enemies strategically one by one. But as soon as you fire up the game and see its chaotic menus and adult-themed dialogue, you'll realize that Yggdra Union is its own beast. The game clearly separates itself from other strategy RPGs in its battle sequences. Rather than simply having you watch each battle animation and hope for victory, Yggdra Union lets you in on the action to help sway a skirmish in your favor. Not only can you change the aggressiveness of a character in midbattle—you can also perform a huge variety of special moves (ranging from specialized weapon attacks to elemental spells) based on a customizable deck of cards.

Manipulating your troops during battle sequences adds great complexity to Yggdra Union, but it's only the tip of the iceberg. The game has a number of defining features, including the ability to set up unions—basically chain attacks that are triggered by placing characters next to each other on the map—before each battle. Setting up effective unions is vital to success, but it can also be incredibly complicated. To compensate for this, you're allowed only one attack per turn, no matter how many allies you have on the battlefield. This often slows the pacing of a battle to an unbearable crawl. Still, Yggdra Union has a style all its own, and is a breath of fresh air in the sometimes-stale strategy-RPG genre. —ANDY M.

SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS: CREATURE FROM THE KRUSTY KRAB

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: BLITZ GAMES
ESRB: EVERYONE

SpongeBob SquarePants: Creature from the Krusty Krab is all about variety: varied art styles, varied gameplay styles, and varied Wii-centric control schemes—there's a lot packed into SpongeBob's absorbent frame. In addition to platforming, racing, free-falling, flying, shooting, and, er, destroying Bikini Bottom as a gigantic Plankton, the game features several minigames and plentiful unlockables. The gameplay quality, however, also spans the spectrum: the 2.5-D platforming stages (in which you turn the Wii remote sideways and use it like an NES pad) are loads of fun, the 3-D action levels are respectable in spite of camera-control issues, and the flying stages (in which you hold the remote upright like a flight stick) left me fighting the controls more than the enemies. The game's on the easy side, too, but it's still a solid platform-action title. —CHRIS H.

CASTLEVANIA: PORTRAIT OF RUIN

RATING: 9.0

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: KONAMI
DEVELOPER: KONAMI
ESRB: TEEN

The Castlevania franchise is in the midst of a second wind that has spawned a nonstop series of handheld hits. It's hard to believe that the developers can keep churning out excellent products with their game-a-year pace, but somehow they've pulled it off again—Portrait of Ruin is every bit as good as last year's widely acclaimed Dawn of Sorrow.

The major innovation in Portrait of Ruin is a dual-hero system that allows the player to control two onscreen characters at once. It sounds complicated, but a robust control scheme and excellent AI allow players to juggle the disparate abilities of two characters with surprising ease. The dual-hero system shines brightest in the well-designed boss battles, where clever combinations of spells, subweapons and co-op attacks lead to deeply satisfying victories.

Thanks to a series of paintings that link to vast areas outside of Dracula's castle, Portrait of Ruin provides a longer quest than any previous game in the series. The portrait areas also offer a welcome break from the usual gloomy castle interiors and give the series' talented composers an opportunity to take the soundtrack in a more adventurous direction. Portrait of Ruin is brighter and poppier than a typical Castlevania, but never strays far from its gothic-horror roots.

Although the game's fundamentals are strong and the dual-hero system is a hit, other new features fall wide of the mark. The massive supply of weapons, relics, skills, and spells provide plenty of depth and variety, but feel like a clumsy substitute for Dawn of Sorrow's elegant soul-collection system. The Wi-Fi co-op mode is disappointingly short and simplistic, and many of the optional side quests are hindered by infuriatingly vague objectives. Such flaws don't detract from the excellent main quest, however, and the exceptional quality of the game's unlockable bonus features more than makes up for the missed opportunities elsewhere.

While this installment doesn't improve significantly on its predecessor, Dawn of Sorrow hardly needed much improvement. Portrait of Ruin provides a whole lot more of a very good thing, and Castlevania fans won't be disappointed with the results. —CASEY L.

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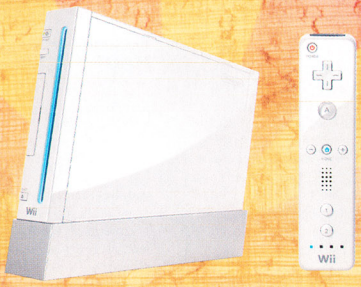

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TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: NINTENDO GAMECUBE
PUBLISHER: EIDOS
DEVELOPER: CRYSTAL DYNAMICS
ESRB: TEEN

The original Tomb Raider has long been regarded as one of the most important action games of all time, but the series has been in slow decline ever since—until Tomb Raider: Legend, that is. Lara's latest adventure has already established itself on other platforms as the glorious comeback for the much-loved series, and we're glad to report that the GameCube version upholds this stature. Legend retains all the aspects that fans love about the series, adds a few twists (such as a grappling hook and interactive cut-scenes), and wraps the whole thing in a fun story involving a mythical tomb. The result is one of the most enjoyable adventure games in recent history. There's not much innovative about Legend—the gameplay mechanics are very Prince of Persia and the plot will have you running from a giant boulder a la Indiana Jones on more than one occasion—but what it does, it does exceedingly well. Every level plays to Lara's strengths, with just the right combination of puzzles and action.

While Legend is undeniably a return to the series' roots, some of the game's most memorable moments have nothing to do with raiding tombs. On one level, for instance, Lara finds herself in downtown Tokyo infiltrating a Yakuza boss's home while dressed in formal-wear. The settings and attire may vary, but the gameplay and level design remain solid no matter what Lara happens to be swinging from, climbing, or shooting. The game's only weakness is that it's over too quickly. Once you get the hang of controlling Lara and using her gadgets, there's nothing left to learn and the puzzles (though well-designed) become less and less challenging. You'll find yourself at the game's finale after only eight or nine hours, wishing that the fun went on just a bit longer. Still, Legend is a breath of fresh air for Tomb Raider fans, and a solid GCN debut for Ms. Croft. —ANDY M.

THE SIMS 2 PETS

RATING: 5.5

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEVELOPER: ELECTRONIC ARTS
ESRB: EVERYONE

The Sims 2 Pets puts you in charge of a veterinary clinic that you run out of your house, where you must diagnose and treat a never-ending stream of sick dogs and cats. You spend your entire day at work, handling the animals and using downtime to scout for new clients in the park nearby. You earn points for the successful treatment of the animals, but it's virtually impossible to do poorly given the time you have during the day. When the workday is over, you immediately skip to the morning of the next day. It sounds kinda boring, and it is—you'll spend hours upon hours washing puppies with flea shampoo and feeding worm-riddled cats, occasionally taking a break to make food or use the bathroom. All of the traditional Sims aspects, such as building a new house and minding your personal welfare, are practically an afterthought. When you tack on lousy controls that require you to alternate constantly between the Control Pad and buttons and the touch screen, it's clear that The Sims 2 Pets needs a serious check-up. —CHRIS S.

HAPPY FEET

RATING: 4.5

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: MIDWAY
DEVELOPER: A2M
ESRB: EVERYONE

Aside from dancing penguins, Happy Feet has only three noteworthy characteristics—a rhythm game, downhill penguin racing, and swimming. None of these activities are particularly intriguing, and after playing each one once, you'll have seen pretty much everything the game has to offer. Still, Happy Feet is a great example of how Wii functionality can make a game better. While the activities do get old quickly, controlling them with the Wii remote is actually a lot of fun. And each one controls very differently, displaying a wide range of the remote's capabilities. On the rhythm levels, for instance, you'll hold the remote like a conductor's baton and flick it in different directions to the beat. The fun may not last long, but it will at least get you excited for future possibilities on Wii. —ANDY M.

ALSO THIS MONTH

Wii versions of several recent GCN releases have come our way with enhanced graphics and motion-based control. They include Midway's **The Ant Bully** and **The Grim Adventures of Billy & Mandy**; Ubisoft's **Open Season**; and THQ's **Avatar: The Last Airbender**, **Cars**, and **The Barnyard**. . . . Activision's **Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam** is also part of the Wii launch. We'll have a review of that title next month. . . . Mixing magic with full-contact combat, Sierra's book-and-movie-based **Eragon** follows the adventures of a young man and his dragon. The DS game offers 3-D action-adventure. The overhead-view GBA game is more RPG-oriented and includes nine playable characters. . . . Unlike dragons, Penguins can't fly, but they can dance in Midway's **Happy Feet** (GCN). . . . DS title **Tamagotchi Connection: Corner Shop 2** from Namco Bandai builds on the original title with a slew of new jobs, including flight attendant and bowling-alley pin setter. . . . In addition to the GCN version of **Bionicle Heroes** (reviewed this issue), Eidos has produced a DS first-person shooter featuring characters from the popular LEGO line, and a GBA version that has object-building exercises similar to those in the LEGO *Star Wars* games. . . . They've been everywhere, including Gilligan's Island. Now the "clown princes of basketball" travel to the DS and GBA in DSi's two-on-two hoops title **Harlem Globetrotters World Tour**. . . . Ubisoft's character-based pet-ownership titles **Dogz** and **Catz** have taken over the DS. EA is also getting into the virtual-pet game with the GBA version of **The Sims 2 Pets**, a story-driven companion to the GCN and DS versions that are reviewed this issue. . . . Game icon Frogger plays the part of a pet in Konami's **My Frogger: Toy Trials** (DS), a puzzle-oriented adventure that has you controlling the human Hero (yes, that's the name of the hero) and Frogger. DS download play and touch-controlled minigames add to the mix. . . . Speaking of toys, **Micro Machines v4**, from Codemasters, is racing onto the DS. . . . More racing takes place in the GBA version of Activision's **Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam** and the DS and GBA versions of EA's **Need for Speed: Carbon**.

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Nintendo

[ARCHIVE]

CEL MATES

Games based on cartoons haven't always received a lot of respect. Some tend to use the popularity of the original material as a crutch for poor quality. A few new GCN entries to the Archive buck that trend by offering a solid playing experience independent of their cartoon ties. With its variety of art styles and simple, but strong gameplay SpongeBob SquarePants: Creature from the Krusty Krab (8.5) is a standout. Naruto: Clash of Ninja 2 (7.5) and Avatar: The Last Airbender (7.0) are also good plays.

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS.
• INDICATES WI-FI COMPATIBLE

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
2006 FIFA World Cup	7.5	Electronic Arts	204	E
American Chopper 2: Full Throttle	5.0	Activision	201	T
The Ant Bully	5.0	Midway	208	E10+
Avatar: The Last Airbender	7.0	THQ	210	E
Barnyard	6.0	THQ	207	E10+
Baten Kaitos Origins	8.0	Nintendo	209	T
Bratz: Forever Diamonds	N/A	THQ	210	E
Cabela's Dangerous Hunts 2	2.5	Activision	200	T
Call of Duty 2: Big Red One	7.5	Activision	200	T
Cars	6.5	THQ	206	E
Chaos Field	6.0	0-3	200	E
Chibi-Robo	8.0	Nintendo	201	E10+
The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe	5.5	Buena Vista	199	T
Curious George	7.0	Namco	202	E
FIFA 07	8.0	Electronic Arts	210	E
FIFA Street 2	7.0	Electronic Arts	203	E
Flushed Away	6.5	D3PA	210	E
From Russia with Love	7.0	Electronic Arts	199	T
The Grim Adventures of Billy and Mandy	6.5	Midway	210	E10+
Gun	8.0, 8.5	Activision	199	M
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire	8.5	Electronic Arts	199	E10+
Harvest Moon: Magical Melody	9.0, 9.5	Natsume	203	E
Ice Age 2: The Meltdown	5.0	Vivendi	203	E10+
Kao the Kangaroo: Round 2	2.5	Atari	203	E
Karaoke Revolution Party	8.0	Konami	199	E10+
The Legend of Spyro: A New Beginning	5.5	Sierra	209	E10+
LEGO *Star Wars* II: The Original Trilogy	7.5	LucasArts	209	E10+
Madden NFL 07	9.0	Electronic Arts	208	E
Major League Baseball 2K6	7.0, 6.5, 6.0	2K Sports	205	E
Mario Party 7	7.5	Nintendo	199	E
Mega Man X Collection	8.5	Capcom	200	E
Monster House	6.5	THQ	207	E10+
Naruto: Clash of Ninja	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	203	T
Naruto: Clash of Ninja 2	7.5	Tomy/D3PA	210	T
Need for Speed: Most Wanted	8.0	Electronic Arts	199	T
Nicktoons: Battle for Volcano Island	N/A	THQ	210	E
Odama	8.5	Nintendo	203	E10+
One Piece: Grand Adventure	5.5	Namco Bandai	208	T
One Piece: Pirates' Carnival	5.5	Namco Bandai	209	E
Open Season	8.0	Ubisoft	209	E10+
Over the Hedge	6.0	Activision	205	E10+
Pac-Man World 3	7.0	Namco	199	E
Pac-Man World Rally	5.5	Namco Bandai	208	E
Peter Jackson's King Kong	9.0	Ubisoft	200	T
Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones	9.0	Ubisoft	200	M
Rampage: Total Destruction	6.5	Midway	204	E10+
Shadow the Hedgehog	8.0	Sega	199	E10+
Shrek Superslam	N/A	Activision	199	E10+
The Sims 2	8.5	Electronic Arts	199	T
Sonic Riders	8.0	Sega	203	E
SpongeBob SquarePants: Creature from the Krusty Krab	8.5	THQ	210	E

REVIEWER NOTES

As far as rhythm games go, Elite Beat Agents has it all—good looks, catchy tunes, simple but addictive gameplay, and personality to spare. Every stage brings legitimate laughs, and you can spend hours trying to beat the harder difficulties or outdo your previous score. I'm not crazy about every song on the playlist, but the variety and sound quality are amazing. EBA revolutionizes the music-game genre; you owe it to yourself to give it a spin. —Chris H.

>COOKING MAMA

Cooking Mama is one of those rare games that can make an everyday chore—in this case, cooking—seem like the most fun activity in the world. I don't have the slightest interest in the culinary arts, but Cooking Mama had me hooked from the get-go with its engaging gameplay and quirky music. And the best thing about Cooking Mama is that somebody else always does the dishes.

—Andy M.

MAGICAL STARSIGN

Magical Starsign makes for a good starter RPG. While the linear quest and largely conventional battle system may induce yawns from role-playing veterans, that straightforward approach provides an accessible entry point for those new to the genre. That's not to say experienced RPG fans can't enjoy this space-faring adventure (the writing is rock-solid and the eclectic cast is eminently likable), but it'll have greater appeal for someone who isn't familiar with the intricacies of Chocobo breeding.

—Steve T.

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Super Mario Strikers	7.5	Nintendo	199	E
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	5.5	Nintendo	208	E
Teen Titans	6.0	Majesco	204	E10+
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 3: Mutant Nightmare	4.0	Konami	199	E10+
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent	4.5	Ubisoft	210	M
True Crime: New York City	8.0	Activision	199	M
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	6.5	Capcom	199	T
X-Men: The Official Game	6.5	Activision	205	T

NINTENDO DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
2006 FIFA World Cup	7.0	Electronic Arts	204	E
Age of Empires: The Age of Kings	8.0	Majesco	201	E10+
Alex Rider: Stormbreaker	4.5	THQ	208	T
• Animal Crossing: Wild World	9.5, 8.5	Nintendo	199	E
Avatar: The Last Airbender	6.5	THQ	210	E
Battles of Prince of Persia	6.5	Ubisoft	200	E10+
Blades of Thunder 2	4.5	Summitsoft	201	E10+
Bratz: Forever Diamonds	N/A	THQ	210	E
Break 'Em All	7.0	D3PA	206	E
Bubble Bobble Revolution	6.0	Codemasters	208	E
Burnout Legends	N/A	Electronic Arts	199	E
Bust-a-Move DS	7.5	Majesco	200	E
Cars	5.5	THQ	206	E
Chicken Little: Ace in Action	6.5	Buena Vista	210	E
Children of Mana	6.5	Nintendo	210	E10+
The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe	7.0	Buena Vista	199	E10+
• Clubhouse Games	7.0	Nintendo	209	E
• Contact	6.5	Atlus	209	E10+
Cooking Mama	7.0	Majesco	209	E
Crash Boom Bang!	4.0	Sierra	209	E
Deep Labyrinth	6.0	Atlus	208	E10+
Dino Master	5.5	Majesco	205	E
Disney's American Dragon: Jake Long—Attack of the Dark Dragon	N/A	Buena Vista	208	E
Dragon Ball Z: Supersonic Warriors 2	5.0	Atari	199	E10+
Dragon Booster	6.0	Konami	200	E
Dragon quest Heroes: Rocket Slime	9.0	Square Enix	208	E
Electroplankton	8.5	Nintendo	200	E
Elf Bowling 1 & 2	N/A	Ignition	200	T
Elite Beat Agents	9.5	Nintendo	210	E10+
FIFA 07	N/A	Electronic Arts	210	E
FIFA Street 2	6.0	Electronic Arts	203	E
Finding Nemo: Escape to the Big Blue	5.0	THQ	202	E
Flushed Away	N/A	D3PA	210	E
Franklin's Great Adventures	N/A	American Game Factory	200	E
Freedom Wings	6.0	Natsume	207	E10+
Golden Nugget Casino DS	6.5	Majesco	201	T
Greg Hastings' Tournament Paintball Max'd	N/A	Activision	201	E10+
Guilty Gear Dust Strikers	7.0	Majesco	204	T
Gunpey DS	6.5	Namco Bandai	210	E
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire	8.0	Electronic Arts	199	E
Harvest Moon DS	6.0	Natsume	208	E
Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi: The Genie and the Amp	4.5	D3PA	206	E10+
Ice Age 2: The Meltdown	4.0	Vivendi	203	E
The Incredibles: Rise of the Underminer	5.5	THQ	199	E10+
Justice League Heroes	3.0	Warner Bros. Interactive	210	E10+
• Konductra	N/A	0-3	208	E
The Legend of Spyro: A New Beginning	N/A	Sierra	209	E
LEGO *Star Wars* II: The Original Trilogy	4.5	LucasArts	209	E
• LostMagic	8.0, 7.0	Ubisoft	204	E
Madden NFL 07	7.5	Electronic Arts	208	E
Mage Knight: Destiny's Soldier	N/A	Namco Bandai	210	E10+
Magical Starsign	7.0	Nintendo	210	E
Magnetica	8.0	Nintendo	205	E
Mario Hoops 3-on-3	7.5	Nintendo	209	E
• Mario Kart DS	9.0	Nintendo	199	E
Mario & Luigi: Partners in Time	9.0	Nintendo	199	E
• Mario Vs. Donkey Kong 2: March of the Minis	7.5	Nintendo	209	E
MechAssault: Phantom War	8.0	Majesco	209	T
Mega Man ZX	8.5	Capcom	208	E
• Metroid Prime Hunters	8.5, 8.0	Nintendo	203	T
Mini RC Rally	N/A	Summitsoft	204	E
Monopoly/Boggle/Battleship	7.0	Atari	200	E
Monster House	5.5	THQ	207	E
Nacho Libre	7.0	Majesco	210	E10+
Need for Speed: Most Wanted	6.0	Electronic Arts	199	E

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
New Super Mario Bros.	9.5,9.5,9.5,9.5	Nintendo	205	E
Nicktoons: Battle for Volcano Island	N/A	THQ	210	E
Open Season	N/A	Ubisoft	209	E
• Over the Hedge	6.0	Activision	205	E
Over the Hedge: Hammy Goes Nuts	N/A	Activision	210	E
Pac-Man World 3	3.0	Namco	200	E
Peter Jackson's King Kong	3.5	Ubisoft	200	T
Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest	6.0	Buena Vista	206	T
Point Blank DS	6.0	Namco Bandai	206	E10+
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Blue Rescue Team	8.0	Nintendo	209	E
Pokémon Ranger	7.0	Nintendo	210	E
Pokémon Trozei	8.5	Nintendo	202	E
Rainbow Islands Revolution	4.5	Codemasters	208	E
Resident Evil: Deadly Silence	8.5	Capcom	202	M
The Rub Rabbits!	8.0	Sega	201	T
SBK: Snowboard Kids	7.5	Atlus	199	E
Scooby-Doo! Who's Watching Who?	6.5	THQ	210	E
Sega Casino	6.0	Sega	199	T
Shrek Superslam	N/A	Activision	199	E10+
The Sims 2	5.5	Electronic Arts	199	E10+
Snood 2: On Vacation	N/A	Destination	199	E
Sonic Rush	9.0	Sega	199	E
SpongeBob SquarePants: Creature from the Krusty Krab	N/A	THQ	210	E
• Star Fox Command	9.5	Nintendo	208	E10+
Star Trek: Tactical Assault	5.5	Bethesda	210	E
The Suite Life of Zack & Cody	N/A	Buena Vista	208	E
Super Black Bass Fishing	4.5	Majesco	204	E
Super Monkey Ball: Touch & Roll	6.5, 7.5	Sega	201	E
Super Princess Peach	7.5	Nintendo	202	E
Tamagotchi Connection: Corner Shop	5.0	Bandai	201	E
Tao's Adventure: Curse of the Demon Seal	6.0	Konami	203	E
• Tenchu: Dark Secret	5.0	Nintendo	208	T
• Tetris DS	9.5	Nintendo	203	E
Texas Hold 'Em Poker Pack	N/A	Summitsoft	200	E
That's So Raven: Psychic on the Scene	N/A	Buena Vista	210	E
Tom and Jerry Tales	N/A	Warner Bros. Interactive	210	E
Tomb Raider: Legend	4.5	Eidos	210	T
• Tony Hawk's American SkBland	8.0	Activision	199	E
Top Gun	4.0	Mastiff	202	E10+
Top Spin 2	6.0	2K Games	200	E
Touch Detective	6.0	Atlus	210	E10+
True Swing Golf	8.0	Nintendo	201	E
Worms: Open Warfare	7.0	THQ	202	E10+
X-Men: The Official Game	7.0	Activision	205	E10+
GAME BOY ADVANCE				
2006 FIFA World Cup	7.5	Electronic Arts	204	E
Alex Rider: Stormbreaker	N/A	THQ	208	E10+
The Ant Bully	N/A	Midway	208	E
ATV Quad Frenzy	N/A	Majesco	199	E
Avatar: The Last Airbender	N/A	THQ	210	E
Babar to the Rescue	N/A	THe Game Factory	206	E
Backyard Baseball 2007	3.5	Atari	204	E
Backyard Basketball 2007	N/A	Atari	209	E
Barnyard	6.5	THQ	207	E
Battle B-Daman	6.5	Atlus	207	E
Battle B-Daman: Fire Spirits!	6.5	Atlus	210	E
Big Mutha Truckers	N/A	Destination	199	E10+
Bratz: Forever Diamonds	N/A	THQ	210	E
Cabbage Patch Kids: The Patch Puppy Rescue	N/A	D3PA	204	E
Candy Land/Chutes & Ladders/ Memory	N/A	Destination	200	E
Capcom Classics Mini Mix	7.5	Capcom	209	T
Care Bears: Care Quest	N/A	THe Game Factory	200	EC
Cars	6.5	THQ	206	E
Castlevania: Harmony of Dissonance/ Aria of Sorrow Double Pack	9.0	Konami	202	T
Catz	N/A	Ubisoft	204	E
The Cheetah Girls	N/A	Buena Vista	208	E
The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe	N/A	Buena Vista	199	E
Curious George	7.0	Namco	202	E
Disney's American Dragon: Jake Long—Rise of the Huntsclan	N/A	Buena Vista	208	E10+
Dogz	N/A	Ubisoft	199	E
Dr. Mario & Puzzle League	7.0	Nintendo	199	E
Dr. Sudoku	6.0	Mastiff	203	E
Dragon Ball: Advanced Adventure	7.0	Atari	203	E10+
Drill Dozer	9.0	Nintendo	201	E
Elf Bowling 1 & 2	N/A	Ignition	200	T

>YOSHI'S ISLAND DS

Yoshi's Island DS is the follow-up to one of the truly great platformers. Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island was released in the same era as Donkey Kong Country. But for my money, the little dinosaur in the cutout candy-colored world wins out, even though Baby Mario's cry can be like fingernails on a chalkboard.

—George S.

FIFA 07

It doesn't feel like a lot has changed in the most recent version of EA's popular soccer game, but it seems that some of the on-pitch controls have taken a step in the wrong direction, particularly passing. Too often when I try to pass to a nearby teammate, I end up booting it to someone much further away. Fortunately, off-field aspects such as the very solid manager mode keep getting tweaked to be more intricate and fun. —Chris S.

>GUNPEY DS

Created by the man who invented the Game Boy and updated by the company that created Meteos, I was expecting a lot more. The crux of the game is a great idea, but very underdeveloped. There's a lot of untapped potential here.

—Chris S.

NARUTO CLASH OF NINJA 2

There are a number of Naruto fighting games available on different systems, but Clash of Ninja 2 is by far the best one to reach these shores. It isn't incredibly deep, but there are a lot of characters to choose from, and the four-player multiplayer mode is a blast. —Andy M.

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
The Fairly OddParents!: Clash with the Anti-World	N/A	THQ	199	E
FIFA 07	N/A	Electronic Arts	210	E
Final Fantasy IV Advance	9.0	Nintendo	200	E10+
Final Fantasy V Advance	8.5	Nintendo	210	E
Flushed Away	N/A	D3PA	210	E
Franklin the Turtle	N/A	American Game Factory	200	EC
The Game of Life/Yahtzee/Payday	N/A	Destination	200	E
Games Explosion!	4.0	THQ	208	E
Garfield and His Nine Lives	5.0	American Game Factory	204	E
Garfield: The Search for Pooky	N/A	American Game Factory	200	E
Greg Hastings' Tournament Paintball Max'd	N/A	Activision	200	E10+
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire	8.0	Electronic Arts	199	E
Hello Kitty: Happy Party Pals	N/A	THQ	199	E
Hi Hi Puffy Amiyumi: Kaznapped!	6.5	D3PA	199	E
Ice Age 2: The Meltdown	4.0	Vivendi	203	E
The Incredibles: Rise of the Underminer	N/A	THQ	199	E
Justic League Heroes: The Flash	5.5	Warner Bros. Interactive	210	E10+
Koala Brothers: Outback Adventures	N/A	American Game Factory	200	EC
Kong: King of Atlantis	N/A	Majesco	200	E
Kong: The 8th Wonder of the World	6.0	Ubisoft	200	E10+
The Land Before Time: Into the Mysterious Beyond	N/A	American Game Factory	201	E
The Legend of Spyro: A New Beginning	N/A	Sierra	209	E
LEGO *Star Wars* II: The Original Trilogy	N/A	LucasArts	209	E
Let's Ride! Dreamer	N/A	THQ	203	E
Madagascar: Operation Penguin	N/A	Activision	199	E
Madden NFL 07	7.0	Electronic Arts	208	E
Majesco's Sports Pack	N/A	Majesco	201	E10+
Mario Tennis: Power Tour	7.0	Nintendo	199	E
Mega Man Battle Network 6: Cybeast Gregar & Cybeast Falzar	7.5	Capcom	206	E
Miss Spider's Harvest Time Hop & Fly	N/A	The Game Factory	206	E
Monster House	5.0	THQ	207	E
Naruto: Ninja Council	4.0	Tomy/D3PA	203	E10+
Naruto: Ninja Council 2	5.5	Tomy/D3PA	210	E10+
Need for Speed: Most Wanted	N/A	Electronic Arts	199	E
Nicktoons: Battle for Volcano Island	N/A	THQ	210	E
Open Season	N/A	Ubisoft	209	E
Operation/Mouse Trap/Simon	N/A	Destination	200	E
Over the Hedge	3.5	Activision	205	E
Over the Hedge: Hammy Goes Nuts	N/A	Activision	210	E
Paws & Claws Resort	N/A	THQ	203	E
Phil of the Future	N/A	Buena Vista	208	E
Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest	7.5	Buena Vista	206	E10+
Pocket Dogs	N/A	0–3	200	E
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Red Rescue Team	8.0	Nintendo	209	E
The Proud Family	N/A	Buena Vista	199	E
Rec Room Challenge	N/A	Majesco	200	E
The Santa Clause 3	N/A	Buena Vista	N/A	E
Shrek Superslam	N/A	Activision	199	E10+
The Sims 2	7.5	Electronic Arts	199	E10+
Sky Dancers	N/A	Crave	199	E
Snood 2: On Vacation	N/A	Destination	199	E
SpongeBob SquarePants: Creature from the Krusty Krab	N/A	THQ	210	E
SRS: Street Racing Syndicate	5.5	Destination	201	T
Sudoku Fever	4.0	Global Star	202	E
Sudoku Mania	N/A	UFO Interactive	206	E
Summon Night: Swordcraft Story	8.0	Atlus	207	E10+
Summon Night: Swordcraft Story 2	8.0	Atlus	210	E10+
Super Robot Taisen: Original Generation	6.5	Atlus	207	T
Tales of Phantasia	8.5	Nintendo	202	E10+
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Double Pack	N/A	Konami	206	E
Tom and Jerry Tales	N/A	Warner Bros. Interactive	210	E
Tomb Raider: Legend	N/A	Eidos	210	T
Tony Hawk's American SkBland	6.0	Activision	199	E
Top Spin 2	N/A	2K Games	200	E
Totally Spies!	5.5	Atari	201	E
The Tower SP	7.0	Sega	203	E
Tringo	N/A	Crave	200	E
Trollz: Hair Affair	N/A	Ubisoft	199	E
The Wild	N/A	Buena Vista	204	E
X-Men: The Official Game	3.5	Activision	205	E10+
Yu-Gi-Oh! GX Duel Academy	6.0	Konami	201	E
Yu-Gi-Oh! Ultimate Masters—World Championship Tournament 2006	6.0	Konami	204	E

CONTROL

GT PRO SERIES

GRIP AND RIP!

GT Pro Series is a high-octane racing game developed exclusively for the Wii – and it comes packed with its very own steering wheel! Literally get behind the wheel of any of the 80+ licensed cars, and before you start making hairpin turns, you can go the garage to completely tune and trick out your ride. The toughest decision is what's next. Race through the intense single-player game? Go drift racing? Or sit down for some serious four-player split-screen? Don't be afraid to love that wheel, either – you can use it with other Wii racing games, too.

Grab your helmet (and the wheel) and get set for Wii racing.

GET REAL Over 80 real cars for you to modify and take for a spin.

DRIFT AWAY Even try your hand at high-octane drift racing!

RIGHT TURN Packed in with GT Pro Series and Monster 4X4 is the innovative steering wheel that turns your Wii Remote into a wireless steering wheel!

MONSTER 4x4 WORLD CIRCUIT

WHEEL AND DEAL!

Get ready for BIG racing thrills, Monster 4X4: World Circuit is pure arcade fun. Race off-road through Russia, Spain, San Francisco, Greece, and Egypt – all on tires the size of Rhode Island! Create traps on the tracks, knock barrels into opponents, and crush the competition under the weight of your mighty monster chasis. With 4-on-4 split-screen multiplayer and exciting mini-games like Monster Soccer you'll have trouble ever putting down that Ubisoft-exclusive steering wheel. In Monster 4X4: World Circuit might does make right!

STOMPZILLA You could use that cool steering wheel to go around – or you could just go over the top!

FREAK

You want Wii™, and more. Tuned for performance, maxed out for control. Ubisoft gets it – and here's the proof. Grip the Ubisoft®-exclusive steering wheel – designed by the pros at Thrustmaster – and you're ready for furious racing. And once you get your hands on Rayman® you'll be hooked. It's Ubisoft, Wii-style...

UBISOFT

Wii

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RAYMAN RAVING RABBIDS

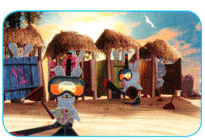
THROW A COW, MILK A PIG, AND BEAT DOWN A BUNNY!

EVERYONE E 10+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

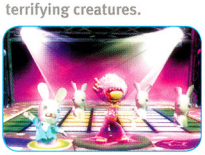
With over 70 totally unique and off-the-wall mini-games designed specifically for the Wii, Rayman Raving Rabbids will give that fancy new controller a serious workout.

Designed by game god and creative genius Michael Ancel, Rayman Raving Rabbids sets you in a fantastical world that has been invaded by crazed, out-of-control bunnies who have taken Rayman captive and who will stop at nothing for total world domination. The only hope of saving Rayman and his world is to partake in "gladiator"-style trials that seem to soothe these hysterical hares. Whether it's mesmerizing the bunnies with your dance moves or engaging in first person toilet-plunger shooting madness, there's a surprise around every corner.

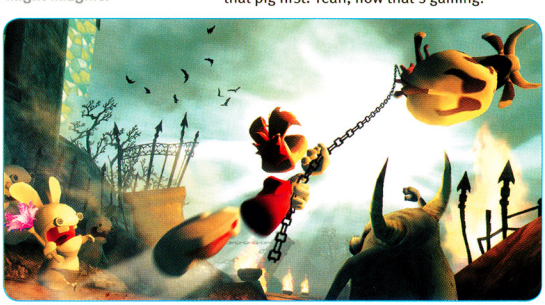
Rayman Raving Rabbids is about wacky fun with your friends, so get ready to experience the most off-the-wall humor while playing the game with the most innovative use of the Wii controller. Just imagine, four people in front of the TV, frantically racing to see who can milk that pig first. Yeah, now that's gaming!



FEAR ME Rabbids are quite terrifying creatures.



HIP HOP Pleasing crazed bunnies is trickier than you might imagine.



BOVINITY The only game that lets – heck, requires – you throw a cow.

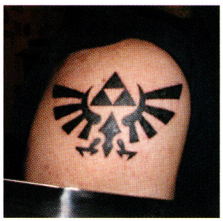
COMMUNITY

TATTOOS

Ink It with Link

Legend of Zelda tattoos are quickly becoming the body mod of choice among the video game cognoscenti. Why ink your guns with a flaming skull, 8-ball, or your baby momma when you can get a super-deluxe Triforce in yellow? You can signal your Hyrulean status to like-minded milk-bar patrons without speaking a word. Call on its power to help you when the chips are down—but if it starts to glow, seek professional help. Feast your eyes on our Zelda skin-art gallery: we have everything from old-school Link to a detailed modern Ganondorf. —Drew W.

Clockwise from far right: James R., Sepheroth, Russ, Arycka, Juan G.



SWEEPSTAKES WINNER

Lucky Great Grandma

Charleen Dekock, our volume 197 sweepstakes winner, was treated to four days in the Big Apple courtesy of Nintendo Power, complete with a $2,000 shopping spree. After an hour-long tour at the Nintendo World store, she took the opportunity to kick back and play some Mario Kart: Double Dash in one of the store's awesome surround-sound egg-chairs. She left the store with her arms full of gifts for her grand- and great-grandchildren, then decided she wanted some Nintendo goods for herself; she marched right back into the store and picked up a DS Lite and Clubhouse Games for the plane ride home. —Jim C.

WI-FI

Blast That Smirk Off

Given our readers' strong showing during our Mario Kart DS Wi-Fi racing sessions earlier this year, we're trembling with fright at the prospect of taking them on again in Star Fox Command. Okay, not really. We're sitting here with our feet up on our desks, snorting derisively and mumbling taunts so you can't really hear us, but you know it's somehow about you. Don't scramble your Arwing just yet: first, e-mail your name, friend code, and screen name to the address shown below. We'll randomly select 30 players then e-mail them details on how to participate in the coming battles.—Drew W.

Take on the NP writers! Go to:

wifi_community@nintendopower.com

EVENTS

Rock-'Em Sock-'Em Rey

Former WWE (World Wrestling Entertainment) World Champion Rey Mysterio is a lot more familiar with the wrestling ring than the boxing ring, but that didn't stop him from dropping by Nintendo's offices in mid-October to get a sneak peek at Wii and take on a few challengers in Wii Sports boxing. Among Rey's opponents: none other than NP's own Chris Hoffman, who prepared for the battle in the only way he knew how—by donning his own *lucha libre* mask. In spite of Chris's advanced training technique, his strategy of blocking Rey's punches with his face didn't pay off, and Rey left him seeing stars early in the second round. After pounding Chris and the rest of his challengers into the mat, the masked superstar commented that Wii Sports boxing was "awesome" and "exactly like real-life boxing, except for feeling the punches," which Rey's opponents were extremely grateful for. Although Rey admits he's not a hard-core gamer, he says he's been playing for the past 10 years and often plays Nintendo GameCube and DS with his kids. Rey's Wii Sports boxing experience also gave him one more chance to one-up his fellow WWE wrestlers by being among the first to play Wii. "Especially King Booker," muses Rey. "He was jealous." —**Jimmie V.**

"If only I had used the steel chair, I'd have had him," laments Chris.

Just call him "el Tonto Purpúreo."

COSPLAY

Agents Are Go!

A coupla months ago, we asked you to send in photos of your Elite Beat Agents costumes. We're pleased to show a couple of the better outfits. Frank A. posed in front of an EBA poster to help sell the image (left), while Jace V. busted out his GameCube microphone to accentuate his costume (right). A huge thanks to everyone who shared their sweet costumes! —**Chris S.**

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Plug in and geek out with the rest of the Nintendo community.

GAME BOY LIVES
Nov. 30-Dec. 3, 2006

Some of the coolest electronic music today is being created on original Game Boy hardware (no joke!). The 8-bit music scene is coming to a head at Blip Festival 2006, a four-day music event in New York City featuring more than 30 8-bit artists. See www.blipfestival.org for tons of info.

BATTLE AT THE PLAZA
Dec. 3, 2006

On the first Sunday of every month, gamers gather at Nintendo World Store in New York for Battle at the Plaza, an ongoing gaming tournament like no other. If you're in the New York area, head down to Rockefeller Plaza to join in on the action and win some great prizes. See www.nintendoworldstore.com for details.

KIRBY RETURNS
Now through Dec. 30, 2006

Fans of the Kirby cartoon can rest easy. Kirby: Right Back at Ya! is back in the 4Kids Saturday morning line-up. Be sure to watch through the end of December for three never-before-aired episodes. Don't miss the final showdown! See www.4kids.tv/kirby for show times.

ART OF THE MONTH

Art Beats

This month's artists nailed the frenetic action of their subject matter: both pieces are reminiscent of Elite Beat Agents' comic-book-style montages. We particularly like Yoshiunity's image for the way it blends the games themes with the artist's style, creating something completely original.

ARTIST:
YOSHIUNITY

SUBJECT:
ELITE BEAT AGENTS

ARTIST:
THUMPER_001

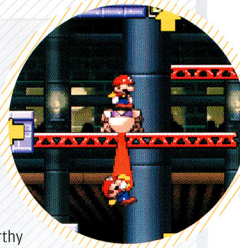
SUBJECT:
ELITE BEAT AGENTS

Looking to submit art for the first time and not sure what to do? Visit **forums.nintendo.com** for details. Be sure to read the rules before you post your masterpieces.

NSider Reviews

Some of our best reviews cover games that don't have many peers, and March of the Minis is definitely one of those. Kudos to Aitrus100 for a very solid assessment.

NSider Review of the Month



Mario vs. Donkey Kong 2: March of the Minis

reviewed by AITRUS100

Although seemingly unrelated to its predecessor, Mario vs. Donkey Kong 2: March of the Minis is nonetheless a worthy successor to the original game.

The puzzle-driven mechanics of the new iteration of the franchise has the player guiding his or her mini-Mario toys around a playfield using the touch screen for all navigation. Controlling the mini-Marios is intuitive and highly enjoyable, which is good because each toy has to be managed independently.

There are a number of different puzzle elements introduced as the player progresses through the game worlds, and the designers did a good job maximizing their use and keeping each of the many stages unique. The only issue here is difficulty balance. Often times, one stage will prove significantly more difficult than several of the stages that follow it, and it's relatively easy to get level stars.

The ability to construct and share stages locally or online is a huge perk, and one that everyone should take advantage of at least once. The added bonus of Nintendo-designed stages being offered only sweetens the deal. There are issues, however. Most notable is the inability to trade stages with players not on your friends list. It's a bummer that you can't peruse a more robust collection of fan made stages.

Mario vs. Donkey Kong 2 is a very entertaining game that provides great experiences for on-the-go gaming. It's worth a play though, and definitely a purchase if puzzle games light your fire.

Let your voice be heard!
If you'd like to submit a review for NP, first become an Nsider at Nintendo.com. Then head to the Reviews forum and submit your game critique. Reviews are selected based on overall writing quality, objectivity, and game knowledge.

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COMMUNITY

Share the Love!

When we started the Community section over a year ago, we weren't quite sure what to expect. We're happy to say that story submissions have been incredible, and the response from readers has been fantastic. From cover bands to cosplay to cakes, we've covered the gamut of Nintendo fandom. But we need to keep hearing from you! If you or anyone you know has a Nintendo-related story to share, remember to send it in. Thanks for your support! —CHRIS S.

DVD

Hooked on the Brothers

Before Bob Hoskins put on the cap and suspenders as the big screen Mario, Captain Lou Albano made the role his own in 1989's *The Super Mario Bros. Super Show!*. Two new four-disc DVD sets each chronicle 24 episodes that flip back and forth between the Mario Bros.' animated adventures in the Mushroom Kingdom and Mario and Luigi's (Danny Wells) live-action shenanigans in their Brooklyn plumbing shop.

Special guests for the first DVD set include wrestler Sgt. Slaughter, Cyndi Lauper (alongside Albano as himself), and NBA legend Magic Johnson. The first set's bonus features offer a recent interview with Albano in which he discusses his background as a wrestler and wrestling manager, and shaving his signature beard for the part of Mario. Second set highlights are guest appearances by Vanna White and Rowdy Roddy Piper, along with four additional animated episodes, and loads of concept art. All together, the sets contain about 22 hours of content. That's probably enough of "Do the Mario" for even the most hard-core fans.
—George S.

FOOD

Let Them Eat Mario

To celebrate a recent birthday, Daniel M. and his mother fashioned this impressive cake depicting an old-school Mario. To create the delectable masterpiece, Daniel first drew the Mario on graph paper, then cut out the drawing, placed it on the cake and outlined each section with a toothpick before placing the dabs of colored icing. That's eight bits of tasty right there.
—Steve T.

COSPLAY

Fan Wear

Pikmin Link keeps on impressing us with her amazing Zelda costumes. This time, she has put together two incredible character costumes from Majora's Mask. The top photo shows Zora, Link's alternate identity that allows him to swing underwater; the bottom photo depicts Lulu, the lead singer of the underwater rockband, the Indigo-Gos. Keep up the great work!

You can tune a guitar, but . . .

NP's Holiday Travel Guide

The holidays are quickly approaching, and for many of you that means dinner at your boring uncle's house and family time with your nerdy cousins. Fortunately, you have your DS for such dire emergencies. We've put together a travel kit of must-have games to take on the road and help you survive the season.

Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow

We're not sure about the ringing of sleigh bells, but there's nothing like the sweet crack of the whip in Dawn of Sorrow. When you finish this gem, you'll be right on time to begin Portrait of Ruin.

Star Fox Command

When "sledding time" comes around, pull on your parka and head straight to the Wi-Fi-equipped coffee shop down the road. Then hop into your Arwing and take on your friends back at home.

Animal Crossing: Wild World

Winter is a magical time of year, both in the real world and in your AC town. Don't miss out on special events and activities you can do only when cold weather blows through your village.

Bomberman DS

There's nothing more fun than you and your cousins yelling "bomb!" at the top of your lungs—your parents will love it. You might not want to play this one on an airplane.

Children of Mana

It gets dark pretty early in the winter, and a good RPG is the best way to whittle away the time after the sun sets. Children of Mana is a fine choice—if you have to share with your brother, you guys can enjoy its co-op multi-player mode.

Elite Beat Agents

Tired of hearing the same holiday carols over and over again? Pop in Elite Beat Agents and groove to your own tunes. We suggest bringing a pair of headphones with you so you don't drive your aunt Milly crazy, though.

Clubhouse Games

If late-night gaming under the covers gets your DS confiscated, leave the Clubhouse Games card in the system for your parents to play. Hey, it's better than them screwing up your Animal Crossing town.

Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney

As the old folks sit around and talk about their boring jobs, you can live the life of a high-powered attorney. Just be careful not to yell "Objection!" when your dad tells you to wash up for Thanksgiving dinner.

Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Blue Rescue Team

The wait for Pokémon Diamond and Pearl is brutal, but for now you can enjoy the very entertaining Pokémon Mystery Dungeon. And if you ask nicely, maybe grandma will knit you some warm Pikachu slippers.

Brain Age

It's important to keep up your daily brain exercises, even when you're on the road. Your mom and dad will probably want to stay sharp, too. Besides, you wouldn't want the good professor to get lonely, would you?

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www.ESRB.org

February 2007 Vol. 212

NEXT MONTH

As we head into the new year, Wii and DS continue to pick up steam. We'll have the latest on new and upcoming titles.

SMOOTH OPERATOR

WarioWare: Smooth Moves brings microgame madness to the Wii console. Our feature story and review of the pose-and-play party game will move you.

DEEP IMPACT

The 50-floor Cave of Ordeals is one of The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess's most challenging sections. We'll guide you all the way through to the Great Fairy.

ROOM SERVICE

Check into Hotel Dusk: Room 215 for an in-depth look at the noirish mystery that has you open your DS as you would a book.

GET CONNECTED

A year after its introduction, Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection is still going strong. We'll take a look at its latest additions, including Castlevania: Portrait of Ruin and Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam.

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Adult (18+)

Rating Pending

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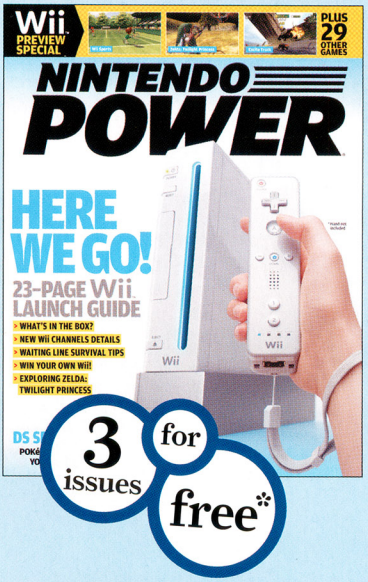

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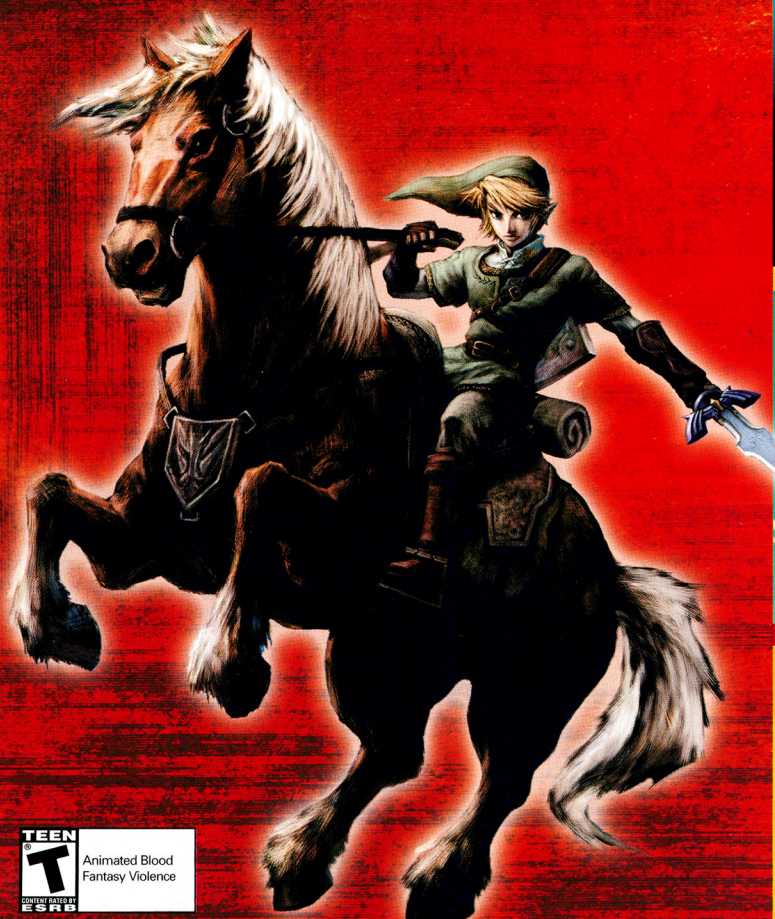

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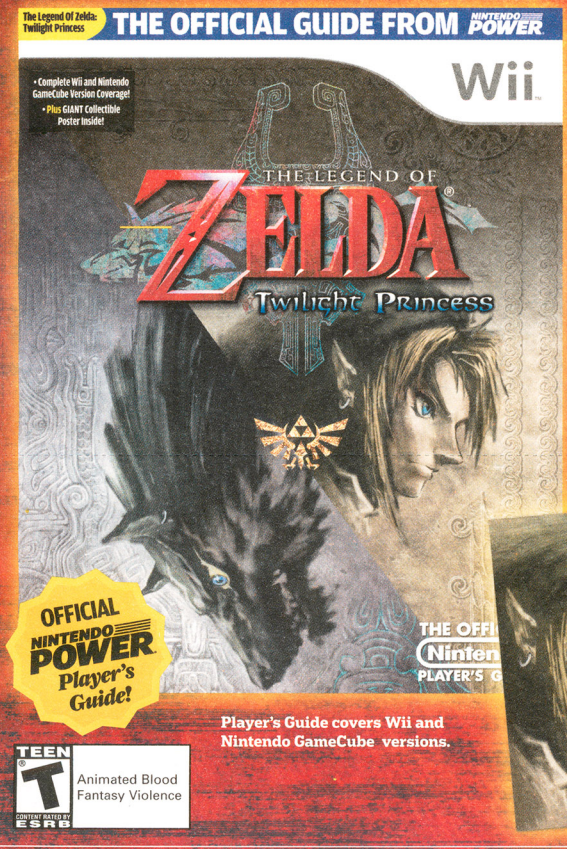

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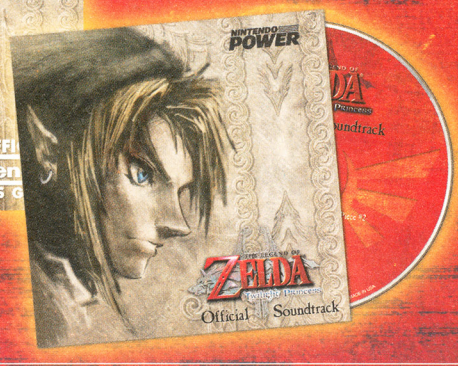

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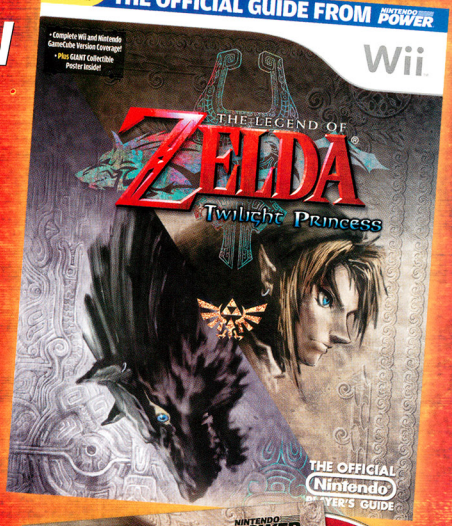

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V205 July 2006

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